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SRI BHAGAVATARATNAVALI

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SRI BHAGAVATARATNAVALI

By

T. B. DHARMARAJA IYER

1981

BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN
KULAPATI MUNSHI MARG
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Dedicated
To
The Blessed Fellowship of Bhagavatas
for their constant inspiration
for religious work.

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FOREWORD

Many of the ancient holy books of our Hinduism are vast and varied in size and content, and inspiring and enjoyable to study and listen to. There are still some men and women among us who have, even in this busy industrial age of ours, the requisite leisure to enjoy reading them or hearing them expounded. But vast numbers of our people today, though deeply devoted to our religion and our holy books, feel unhappy at not having long hours to spare, in the midst of the pressures of modern life and work, for the study of these holy books. In response to their need, many abridged editions of these books, short and long, are now available in the market.

Among our holy books, the *Srimad Bhagavatam* holds a unique place of universal popularity and spiritual appeal. Its message of pure *bhakti,* reinforced by *jnana,* knowledge, and *vairagya,* renunciation of unrestrained sensuality, has a special relevance to arrest the current soul-killing materialistic wave in human society.

Shri Dharmaraja Iyer's *Bhagavata Ratnavali* is meant to serve this sacred purpose. His translation of its 108 selected verses into English vastly adds to the usefulness of the book. From the ever-increasing thirst of our people to read such books, which is evident today, we can visualise the possibility of the realisation, in the modern age, of

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the old prediction of the *Bhagavata Mahatmyam:*

Jnana-vairagya yukta yā
bhaktih prema-rasāvahā;
Prati geham prati janam
tatah kridam karisyati

'Then will set in, in every home and in every heart, the sport of that *bhakti* which, endowed with *jnana* and *vairagya*, is the carrier of the nectar of divine Love.'

Ramakrishna Math,
Hyderabad-29
December 15, 1980 SWAMI RANGANATHANANDA

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PREFACE

Soon after a Bhagavata *saptaha parayanam* done by me some time back, it occurred to me to extract about one hundred and eight verses from all over the *purana* and group them under appropriate heads to facilitate a summary Bhagavata *parayanam* daily.

Accordingly, a dozen titles were selected, not *Skandhawise* but representing the topics that came to my mind uppermost, — I dare not call them the most important — and nine *slokas* were allotted to each, making a total of 108 *slokas* in twelve series.

Selecting 108 verses out of 18,000 contained in the Text should not apparently be so difficult, but when the process started, the competition among the 18,000 to enter the 'Ring' was unimaginably tough. In fact, for every single 'stone' wanted, dozens and scores of 'diamonds,' 'emeralds' and 'pearls' were freely offered by the '*Ratnakara*'. Well, with sincere apologies to the spared gems, the selection was somehow completed.

It was originally intended for myself. The whole thing could be recited in a matter of minutes, every day, and more than once a day if I cared to. It appeared to help develop *bhakti*, *jnana* and *vairagya* more effectively and to give me greater satisfaction than the reading of three or four chapters from the Text in equal time. I say this with due respect to the chapters.

Soon my thoughts went to like-minded people. Why not extend the '*Ashtottara*' to them, too? In that case, I thought it might be better to append a rough English translation of the verses indicating their context as well.

* * *

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That is the genesis of *Sri Bhagavata Ratnavali*. To make the work more useful, a chapter on the genesis of *Srimad Bhagavata* and an outline of the whole *purana* have been added.

As the verses under each head have been taken from different contexts in the Text the translation has been slightly varied here and there so as to suit their sequence. Care has been taken, however, to avoid any material distortion.

References to the verses selected have been given in a separate chart, Appendix I. Non-English words used in the booklet have been italicised. A glossary of such terms (not explained then and there) has been provided in Appendix II.

There is some overlapping of ideas and matter, especially under the heads 7, 8 and 9. As these constitute the quintessence of the entire *Bhagavata*, nay of all religion and philosophy, the little defect, if at all, may be justified. Similarly there is little difference in nature between the verses in the third and in the tenth series. It is all in praise of the Lord — Where there is no possibility of any excess or redundancy.

The childhood days of Sri Krishna and the unforgettable *gopi* episodes are conspicuous by their absence. Without inventing any justification for this we plead guilty. Let the omission help us to remember them with a vengeance!

Should this humble compilation serve in any measure to add to the joy or edification of *Bhagavata* lovers or to increase the tribe our labours will have been amply rewarded.

We take this opportunity sincerely to thank all those who have helped us in any manner in bringing out this

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Mini-Bhagavata. In particular, we are highly beholden to the revered Shri Swami Ranganathananda for gracing the *Ratnavali* with a fitting Foreword. Our special thanks are also due to the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan for condescending to undertake the publication of such a small work and doing full justice to it, evincing due regard for the subject. We also wish to express our thanks to Nivedanam Prakashan, Surendra Nivas, Dadabhai Road, Vile Parle (W), Bombay-400 056, for allowing us to reproduce on the cover the picture of "Radha-Krishna" which appeared on the cover of their *Sri Venu Gitam* published by the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. We can say only "*Namo namah*" to the great commentators and translators of *Srimad Bhagavata* whose works we have made free use of. For the Glossary we are indebted almost solely to the Sanskrit-English Dictionary by V. S. Apte of revered memory.

Bombay,

New Year's day, 1981. T. B. DHARMARAJA IYER

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I

INTRODUCTORY

Srimad Bhagavata, as is well known, is one of the eighteen *puranas* believed to have been composed by the sage Vyasa. 'Bhagavata' literally means 'pertaining to or belonging to God, Godly'. In fact, all the *puranas* deal with God and are Godly. Why then, one might ask, is this one *purana,* which is said to have been composed after the other seventeen *puranas,* distinctly called 'Bhagavata' while the others are called Brahma Purana, Vishnu Purana, Siva Purana, Skanda Purana, Padma Purana and so on. What is it about? What exactly is Bhagavata?

2. Sri Krishna Himself gives the answer. After fulfilling His life's mission He was preparing to leave this world — quietly. Uddhava, His chum and an ardent devotee, would not leave Him. He was asked to go to Badarivana and spend the rest of his life in prayers and penance. But knowing his Master's intentions and unable to bear the separation, he followed His footprints in search of Him, and there on the banks of the river Saraswati, found Him in His full splendour, seated all alone, preparatory to quitting. In that parting scene, Sri Krishna with His endearing smile and affectionate glances cheeringly tells His devout follower, "I am immensely pleased with your unflinching devotion. You have earned My grace in this life. I know your heart's desire. I shall now bestow on you what you earnestly seek. It is extremely difficult for others to attain. In the beginning, this was imparted by Me to Brahma, the Creator." Thus saying, Sri Krishna in one pithy phrase explains what is Bhagavata: ज्ञानं परं मन्महिमावभासं यत्सूरयो भागवतं वदन्ति। "That Supreme Knowledge revealing My greatness and glory, which the sages call 'Bhagavata'."—(*Skandha* III, ch. 4, v.13)

3. Thus we see that 'Bhagavata' was first imparted by Bhagavan Himself to Brahma. Brahma in a suitable context narrated the gist of Bhagavata to His son Narada. At Narada's instance Sage Vyasa composed Srimad Bhagavata as a great *purana* dealing with the stories of Sri Hari

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and containing the very essence of all the *Vedas* and *Itihasas* and conveyed It to his son Suka. Sri Suka recited the Bhagavata before King Parikshit who had gone on a vow of fast unto death on the banks of the holy Ganga amidst several eminent sages. Suta, the *puranic* story-teller, was also present among the distinguished audience, and he in the traditional way gave the benefit of his hearing to the sages Sounaka and others in the sacred Naimisha forest. This is the Srimad Bhagavata which we have the good fortune to read and hear and enjoy without satiation.

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II

SUTA'S INTRODUCTION OF SRIMAD BHAGAVATA

Suta tells the sages Sounaka and others in the sacred Naimisha forest:

"In the Dwapara *Yuga* the sage Vyasa, a partial incarnation of Sri Hari, was born as a son of Satyavati. One morning, after finishing his ablutions in the holy Saraswati, he was sitting on a solitary spot and reflecting on the changed (for the worse) moral conditions in the world due to the unnoticed passage of time. Finding that people had generally become infirm, faithless, indolent, dull-headed, short-lived and unfortunate, the sage with his divine knowledge considered the common good of all irrespective of caste, creed or stages in life. For the continued performance of the *Vedic* sacrifices which purify man, the sage divided the *Veda* (originally one) into four branches called the Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda and Atharva Veda, and the *Itihasas* and *Puranas* being called the fifth *Veda*. Each branch was studied by a sage. These sages further sub-divided them through their disciples and so on. Thus the kind-hearted sage Vyasa enabled even the less intelligent ones to learn at least some parts of the *Vedas*.

2. "For the benefit of women, the *Sudras* and others who are not eligible to learn the *Vedas*, the sage composed the great epic, *Mahabharata*.

3. "In spite of his ceaseless and whole-hearted work for the welfare of humanity the sage could not find peace of mind. With an uneasy heart he sat in a lonely place on the bank of the Saraswati and began to search his heart to find out the reason for his gloom.

4. " 'Have I not', the sage said to himself, 'duly and sincerely honoured the Vedas, the *gurus* and the Sacrificial Fires and followed their teachings? Under the name of *Bharata* (the Mahabharata) I have also expounded the meaning of the *Vedas* and shown the proper paths even for women, the *Sudras* and others. Yet my soul is rest-

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less and does not seem to have realized its goal. Perhaps I have not fully dealt with such *dharmas* as lead to the Lord, the favourite ones of the *paramahamsas* who are the beloved of the Lord?'

5. "At this juncture the divine sage Narada came to the spot with his *Veena* in hand. Sri Vyasa at once rose and received him with due honours. After a while, seated comfortably, Narada with a smile of surprise said to Vyasa: 'Blessed sage, the son of Parasara, I hope you are quite well. You have mastered all that one would like to. You have composed the wonderful Mahabharata which contains all the Arthas (*Purusharthas — dharma, artha, kama* and *moksha* which man would wish to attain). You have also known and realised the Eternal *Brahman*. In spite of all this you seem to be disconsolate, as if you have failed in your duty.'

6. "Vyasa admitted the truth of all that was said of him by Narada, but still pleaded that he was not contented at heart, and requested Narada to point out to him the reason for his uneasiness.

7. "Sri Narada replied: 'You are *yet* to describe the pure glory of the Lord. You have dwelt more on *dharmas, arthas* and the like than on the greatness of Vasudeva. The proof of all attainments is in the pleasure of Sri Hari. The fruition of one's penance, sacrifices, donations, learning, chanting of the *Vedas*, etc. is in the glorification of the Lord's qualities. Therefore, for the liberation of all from the bondage of *karma* you now concentrate on the doings of the Almighty and describe His glories. In dealing with other subjects the mind gets distracted in diverse forms and names and finds no rest'.

8. "Narada then recounted the story of his past life and how he acquired the Supreme Knowledge and *Bhakti* and took leave of the sage.

9. "When Narada left, the sage Vyasa sat in deep meditation in his *asrama* called Samyaprasa on the wes-

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tern bank of the Saraswati. In his pure mind full of devotion he saw first the Lord and then *Maya,* His handmaid. He also found people being deluded by *Maya* and hence suffering. Considering *Bhakti Yoga* as the best means of relieving the ignorant from misery the sage composed the glorious Srimad Bhagavata."

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III

SUMMARY OF SRIMAD BHAGAVATA

Srimad Bhagavata contains in all 18,000 *slokas* divided into twelve *Skandhas*, each *Skandha* being divided into several chapters.

Skandha I: The first *Skandha* opens with the sage Sounaka and others in the Naimisha forest asking Suta the means of overcoming *Kali*. Suta declares that reciting and listening to the Lord's stories are the best safeguards against all evils, and mentions, in passing, the various incarnations of the Lord. The *Skandha* contains a brief account of the genesis of Srimad Bhagavata and is further adorned by two beautiful and devotional prayers by Kunti and Bhishma. The stage after the Mahabharata war, the coronation and reign of King Yudhishtira, the return of Sri Krishna from Hastinapura to Dwaraka, Arjuna's impassioned though belated recognition of his indebtedness to Krishna for all his glorious achievements, the renunciation of the Pandavas and their ascension to heaven, the ascendancy of King Parikshit and subjugation of *Kali* by him: these are among the other contents of the *Skandha*.

2. Its closing chapters deal with a thoughtless crime committed by King Parikshit and, in atonement for it, his renunciation and entering upon a penance of fast unto death on the banks of the holy Ganga. Several illustrious sages assemble to witness the heroic sacrifice and the king seeks their benediction. The *Skandha* ends with the dramatic arrival of Sri Suka on the scene and King Parikshit prostrating himself before him and praying for his guidance and advice.

3. *Skandha II*: Bhagavata proper, which is the discourse between King Parikshit and the sage Suka, commences in the second *Skandha*. The king asks various questions and the sage replies. At the outset, in order to facilitate concentration on the Abstract or the imperceivable form of the Lord, the sage describes His concrete or material form. The king's interest in listening to the

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Lord's stories is awakened. In reply to his further queries about the creation of the universe, Sri Suka refers to a conversation between Brahma and Narada. Brahma tells Narada about the origin of the Cosmos and describes the glories of the Cosmic Being and also narrates briefly the various Incarnations of the Lord. Before concluding the *Skandha,* Sri Suka repeats to the king the Secret and Supreme Knowledge of Bhagavata as originally imparted by the Lord to Brahma in four *slokas.*

4. *Skandha III*: In the beginning of the third *Skandha,* two great devotees, Uddhava and Vidura, meet. Vidura makes eager enquiries about all the news in Dwaraka. Uddhava painfully discloses the virtual extinction of the Yadava family and also the departure of Krishna from the world. He then recounts briefly the whole life history of Krishna from His childhood onwards. In the end, Vidura requests Uddhava to convey to him the parting message of Krishna. Uddhava, as already instructed by Krishna, directs him to the sage Maitreya.

5. Vidura meets the sage Maitreya at the gateway of the Ganga (probably Haridwar). The rest of the third *Skandha* is covered by the conversation between Vidura and Maitreya. Maitreya describes to Vidura the process of Creation and the appearance of the Cosmic Body. During the conversation there is a thrilling reference to Brahma's search for the bottom of the lotus on which He was seated all alone. The search extending over a very long period proves futile and Brahma receives a hint to do penance. Brahma then discovers the sublime form of the Lord reclining on the serpent Adi Sesha and he extols the Lord. This is one of the famous *stutis* in Bhagavata.

6. The story of the Lord's Incarnation as a Boar, His encounter with Hiranyaksha and the death of the latter at His hands also appears in this *Skandha.* Related to the above story is the fall of Jaya and Vijaya from *Vaikunta* as a result of the curse by the Sanaka Brothers, and their birth as Hiranyakasipu and Hiranyaksha.

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7. The *Skandha* also deals with the marriage of Devahuti and Kardama. Kapila, their son, is also one of the Incarnations of the Lord. The advice of Kapila to His mother Devahuti is one of the most learned discourses and highly philosophical. A beautiful description of the physical form of the Lord from head to foot — (rather it is from foot to head) — by Kapila to His mother appears as a crest jewel to this *Skandha*. After hearing the advice of Kapila and meditating on the Lord's form as described by Him, Devahuti attains final beatitude.

8. *Skandha IV*: The conversation between Vidura and Maitreya is continued till the end of the Skandha. The Incarnations of the Lord as Datta, son of the sage Atri and Anasuya, and as Nara and Narayana, sons of Dharma and Murti, are mentioned in the beginning.

9. Maitreya then narrates the story of Daksha *Yagna*. Daksha, one of the *Prajapatis*, performs a big sacrifice which is attended by all the gods, sages and other eminent personages. Sati, his daughter and consort of Siva, also desires to attend the function in the company of Her Lord, but the Lord declines in view of a long-standing quarrel between Himself and His father-in-law. Sati, however, goes alone, escorted by the attendants of Siva. She is not welcomed by Her father or any one else but Her mother and sisters. She feels insulted and censures Her father, and fixing Her mind steadily on the feet of Her Lord, the Lord of all the worlds, she casts away Her body in the fire engendered by Her *Yoga*. A fight ensues between the attendants of Siva and Daksha's party in which the former are routed. The Lord receives the news from Narada and, highly enraged, He sets out with His followers, devastates the whole Sacrifice and finally chops off Daksha's head. Brahma and the gods appease the Lord, the Lord pardons Daksha, Daksha is restored to life, Sri Hari comes to the spot and the *Yagna* is formally concluded. A wonderful description of Kailasa, the abode of Siva, the appearance of Sri Hari and the lofty praises showered on Him by the gods and Sri Hari's proclaiming the oneness of Himself,

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Brahma and Siva afford charm and grace to the otherwise not very pleasant story.

10. Then comes the exciting story of Prince Dhruva who at the age of five years or so leaves his parents and goes to the forest to find out Hari and please Him. The austerity of Dhruva's penance, the charming picture of Sri Hari furnished to the boy by Narada for meditation, the Lord's appearance before him and Dhruva's praise of the Lord are most inspiring, to say the least.

11. Continuing, the sage tells Vidura the story of the illustrous King Prithu, after whom the earth is called *'Prithvi'*. At the instance of the Lord, Sanatkumara imparts the Supreme Knowledge to the king who ultimately goes to *Vaikunta.*

12. Another interesting story appearing in the fourth *Skandha* is that of Puranjana. It is an allegory explaining that one continues in the vicious circle of births and deaths on account of worldly associations (especially with women) and attains liberation by association with the Lord Who is within oneself, i.e., by constant meditation.

The conversation between Vidura and Maitreya ends with the fourth *Skandha* and the direct talk between King Parikshit and Sri Suka resumes.

13. *Skandha V:* King Nabhi with his wife Merudevi performs a sacrifice for the sake of getting a son. The Lord is pleased with his sincere devotion and appears in person. The priests pray for a son to the king like the Lord Himself. In response to their prayer and unable to find another like Himself, the Lord takes another incarnation and is born as a son to King Nabhi. The king names Him Rishabha. It is said that even Indra envied Him and on one occasion withheld rain from His country, and Rishabha by His own powers caused rain and made all His subjects happy.

14. Rishabha begets one hundred sons like Himself, the eldest among them being Bharata after whom our country is called Bharatavarsha. Though all His sons are

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wise and learned, Rishabha as the duty of a parent advises them in the midst of several sages and later on renounces the world and goes to the forest. While in the forest having completely forgotten the world, His body is consumed by the flames in a wild fire.

15. Bharata begets five sons and after a long period of righteous and benevolent rule he renounces the world and goes to Pulahasram. Owing to his over-attachment to a deer during his last days, Bharata, after his death, is re-born as a deer. After spending the life as a deer he is again born in a Brahmin family. In this life, remembering the consequences of attachment, Bharata remains absolutely indifferent to everything and behaves like an idiot.

16. On one occasion he is caught hold of by a band of robbers and offered as a sacrifice at the altar of Goddess Bhadrakali. Bharata is unmoved, but the goddess realising his true greatness sets him free and punishes the bandits.

17. Subsequently, Bharata is taken as one of the bearers of King Rahugana's palanquin. Rahugana comes to know of the greatness of Bharata and realising his own folly and ignorance he falls at his feet and prays for pardon. Bharata then imparts knowledge to Rahugana and clears all his doubts. Rahugana is enlightened. Bharata says this knowledge is called "Vasudevam" by the sages and it cannot be attained by learning the *Vedas* or by performing penance, *Yagnas* or other rites, but only by service at the feet of *Mahatmas*.

18. Sri Suka further describes in this *Skandha* the various geographical divisions of the earth into several continents and sub-continents with their areas and features and the names of the several rivers and mountains in each. He also gives a fairly detailed description of the Solar system and explains that all these are parts of the Universal Form of the Lord and help us imagine His infinite greatness and magnitude. The *Skandha* ends with a brief description of the various infernos for various sins.

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19. *Skandha VI*: The king asks the sage how one can escape the horrible hells described at the end of the previous *Skandha*. The sage takes this opportunity to extol the supreme virtue of the Lord's names and illustrates it by narrating the story of Ajamila, a great sinner. There is an argument between the attendants of Sri Hari and those of Dharmaraja (Lord Yama), and the former assert that notwithstanding anything contained in any other code of *Dharma* the mere utterance of the Lord's name, consciously or unconsciously, redeems all kinds of sins committed in this or any number of previous births, and Ajamila having called the holy name "Narayana" is, therefore, eligible for *Vaikunta*. The baffled sepoys of Yama go and consult their Lord; Dharmaraja confirms the statement of the attendants of Vishnu and further warns them never again to approach those who utter the holy names of Sri Hari, and for the case under reference he personally prays Hari for pardon.

20. The story of the demon Vritra is also told in the sixth *Skandha*. Viswarupa, son of Twashta, is killed by Indra. To avenge the crime, Twashta creates Vritra out of his sacrificial fire. Vritra is so powerful that the gods approach Sri Hari for help. Sri Hari suggests that they request the sage Dadhichi for surrendering his body and with his bones Viswakarma prepare a weapon. As the weapon will contain some power of Sri Hari, Indra can fight against Vritra and kill him with that.

21. The gods act accordingly. During the fight between Vritra and Indra, Vritra speaks words of wisdom of the highest order manifesting *bhakti*, *gnana* and *vairagya*. Indra is wonderstruck at his fierce opponent's words. However, in the fight he is able to kill Vritra as the weapon contains Sri Hari's blessing.

22. The previous life of Vritra is then narrated to explain how Vritra, though a powerful demon, was so enlightened and devout. As King Chitraketu, he suffers the loss of a child. The sages Narada and Angiras console him and make the *jiva* of the dead child talk. The *jiva*

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talks of the various births one undergoes by one's actions and tells that the relationships of father, son and so on are unreal and arising out of ignorance.

23. Narada then advises a *mantra* to Chitraketu by which Chitraketu pleases Lord Ananta and becomes the Lord of the *Vidyadharas* and enjoys a long life of unequalled power combined with devotion. While in this status, once he happens to criticize Lord Siva for embracing Goddess Parvati in the midst of several sages, *siddhas, charanas* etc. The Lord does not mind it, but the goddess feels the insult and curses him. Chitraketu being already enlightened is indifferent to pleasures and pain and does not mind the effects of the curse, but still regrets his mistake and apologizes to the goddess and goes his way. The Lord in the presence of all the sages and gods praises the greatness of the devotees of Sri Hari, saying they know no fears and always maintain their equanimity whether in heaven, hell or *mukti*. It is this Chitraketu who is since born of the sacrificial fire of Twashta.

24. The *Skandha* also contains a narration of the birth of the seven *maruts* who are step-brothers of Indra.

25. *Skandha VII*: The sage reports to the king a discourse between King Yudhishtira and the sage Narada. Out of a total of fifteen chapters in the *Skandha* ten are devoted to the story of Bhakta Prahlada.

26. Hiranyakasipu, by virtue of the boons obtained by him from Brahma after a long and severe penance, conquers the three worlds, ousts Indra and occupies his place. The gods as usual approach Sri Hari Who consoles them saying when Hiranyakasipu offends the gods, the *Vedas*, cows, saints and lastly his own righteous and devout son, his end will be worked.

27. Prahlada, son of Hiranyakasipu, is a friend to all and has a natural love for Hari. As Hiranyaksha, brother of Hiranyakasipu, was killed by Hari, Hiranyakasipu treats Him as his enemy and therefore cannot tolerate Prahlada's love for Him. He likes Prahlada to be his true son and

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successor and entrusts him to his family *pundits* for qualifying in *Trivarga* (*dharma, artha* and *kama*), essential for kings. Prahlada, however, ignores their teachings as of no real or lasting value and, instead, develops his own 'Hari-mania' (a rare disposition rapidly disappearing in this age of civilization and 'advancement').

28. After a term, when Hiranyakasipu asks Prahlada what best he has learnt so far, Prahlada replies with humble pride, "Hearing, reciting, remembrance and worship of Hari, close association with Hari, obeisance, prayer, service and self-surrender to Hari: these constitute the summit of learning, I believe". Hiranyakasipu flies into a rage, reprimands the teachers for 'misguiding' his son and orders Prahlada to be submitted to various tortures such as piercing with spears, burning, poisoning, hurling from heights etc. Prahlada having 'insured' himself with Hari against all risks comes out unscathed, to the amazement and horror of Hiranyakasipu who sends him back to the *pundits* for a more rigorous discipline and training.

29. During the second term Prahlada not only does not 'improve', but spreads his cult to his fellow students. On being reported to by the teachers Hiranyakasipu determines to kill his son. With sword in hand, he raves at the boy, "Where is your Hari? I am going to behead you now. Let Him save you if He can. If He is everywhere as you brag, why He is not in this pillar?" Thus saying he strikes a nearby pillar, and out springs Hari suddenly in a marvellous and fierce form, half human and half like a lion, roaring like thunder, with wide open jaws, sharp teeth and an outstretched tongue. After a short but sharp encounter Hari with His claws tears His opponent asunder and kills him.

30. The once oppressed worlds sigh in relief. All the gods and sages sing in praise of Narasimha. As the Lord is not appeased even after all their praise and when even His consort dare not approach Him, Brahma tries Prahlada as a last resort. Prahlada goes forth fearlessly and falls at the feet of his Lord. The Lord is pleased,

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lifts the boy and blesses him. Then Prahlada praises the Lord.

31. The story of Prahlada and his praise of the Lord constitute a compendious masterpiece on *bhakti, gnana* and *vairagya*. The Lord is so much pleased with Prahlada's unalloyed and steadfast devotion that He calls him "a model for all My devotees."

32. The remaining five chapters of the seventh *Skandha* deal with Narada's discourse on the codes of conduct and ordinary duties of men and women, the four *Asramas* (*Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha* and *Sanyasa*) and the common path for all castes and at all stages for attaining liberation.

33. *Skandha VIII*: In the beginning the first four *manvantaras* viz. the Swayambhuva, Swarochisha, Uttama and Tamasa are mentioned. (Fourteen Manus reign successively during each *day* of Brahma for seventy-one odd *chaturyugas* each, and the period of each Manu is called a *manvantara*. The present one is the seventh, called Vaivaswata, on the first day of the first year in the second half, i.e., in the fifty-first year, of the *present* Brahma. Some Brahmas have preceded and yet others are to follow. A *chaturyuga* means a cycle of the four *Yugas* — *Krita, Treta, Dwapara* and *Kali* aggregating 43,20,000 of our years, and 1,000 *chaturyugas* make one *day* time of Brahma.)

34. In the Tamasa *manvantara* the Lord takes the incarnation as 'Hari' and saves *Gajendra* from the clutches of a crocodile. The elephant king thinks he is the monarch of all he surveys in his forest but unfortunately he is caught by a crocodile in a lake. None of his companions is able to rescue him. The fight between the elephant and the crocodile lasts a thousand years. At last *Gajendra* remembers Hari and prays from the bottom of his heart. The prayer reaches all the gods, but each one claiming distinctive features sits tight. Hari has no 'distinctive features'. He satisfies all descriptions and is ever ready to answer the call of the suffering. He at once descends with His *Chakra* on hand, liberates *Gajendra* and takes him to His

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Abode in His own form. *Gajendra's* prayer is unique and superb in its meaning and sense of devotion.

35. The fifth and sixth *manvantaras* viz. the Raivata and Chakshusha are mentioned next. The story of *amrita-mathana* comes in the latter and the Lord incarnates Himself as Ajita, *Kurma* (Tortoise) and Dhanvantari. At the instance of the Lord the gods make friends with the demons and they jointly churn the milk-ocean out of which, among other things, comes nectar. A dispute arises between the two parties in its distribution and the Lord again comes to the rescue of the gods. He takes the form of *Mohini* (a beautiful damsel) and arbitrates in such a way that only the gods enjoy the nectar.

36. However abridged, the above story will be incomplete without a mention of two other objects which arise from the ocean before nectar. One is the great venom *Halahala* which threatens to destroy the three worlds. The gods request Lord Siva (the so-called Destroyer) for protection, and with the consent of Goddess Parvati He swallows the poison and thus acts as the Saviour (another indication of the oneness of Protector and Destroyer). The other is Goddess Lakshmi Whom everybody loves, but Who loves Sri Hari and chooses Him as Her worthy Lord.

37. The other eight *manvantaras* are also mentioned in the eighth *Skandha,* their names being Vaivaswata (the present one which is the seventh), (8) Savarni, (9) Dakshasavarni, (10) Brahma Savarni, (11) Dharma Savarni, (12) Rudra Savarni, (13) Deva Savarni and (14) Indra Savarni. Thus the fourteen Manus one after the other reign during each *day* of Brahma as stated before.

38. Sri Suka then narrates to the king the story of Mahabali, the magnanimous *asura* monarch who surrendered all his possessions and himself to the Lord. Mahabali is the grandson of Prahlada. The gods being defeated by him, Aditi, the mother of Indra, opens her mind to her husband, the sage Kasyapa, who advises her to observe a vow with a view to begetting a son who will restore to Indra his lost supremacy. The Lord is pleased with her

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observance and is since born to her as a son, who is named Vamana.

39. Vamana goes to Mahabali and requests him for a gift of three feet of land. On being granted, the Lord takes His universal form and measures with His two feet the entire heaven and earth and all other space which Bali once boasted as his. Bali recognizes his guest as Lord Vishnu and offers 'his own' head — (whence he got it?) — for the third foot. The Lord while thus restoring to Indra his lost ground, appreciates Bali's magnanimity and unflinching regard for truth and sends him to Sutala, one of the nether worlds, where he is provided with all amenities surpassing heaven itself, and Himself stands guard against any possible trouble. The story is an impressive study in *ahamkara* and *mamakara*, the 'I' and 'mine' that delude us.

40. The *Skandha* ends with the story of *Matsyavatara*. During the past deluge, when the whole universe is under water the demon Hayagriva steals the *Vedas* from Brahma. Sri Hari incarnates Himself as a Fish, kills Hayagriva and restores the *Vedas* to Brahma. In this incarnation the Lord confers the Supreme Knowledge on the devout king Satyavrata in the presence of several sages. Satyavrata has since become the Vaivaswata Manu and it is after his name that we call our present Age Vaivaswata Manvantara in our *samkalpas*.

41. *Skandha IX*: In this Skandha the genealogies of the kings of the solar and the lunar races are narrated. In many cases only the names of the kings are mentioned; here and there a few stories are also told.

42. First, the story of King Ambarisha, son of Nabhaga. In appreciation of his sincere devotion and righteousness Sri Hari lends His Chakra to the king for his protection all-round. At the end of a vow observed by the king for a year he invites the sage Durvasas for meal; but as some delay occurs in the sage's returning from his ablutions the king drinks a little water in the mean while, if only to formally conclude his vow in proper time. The

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sage is offended at this and creates a fierce being to punish the king. Sri Hari's Wheel, however, in defence destroys the sage's creature and flies towards the sage in revenge. The sage flees for his life to all corners of the earth, the seas and the sky but the Wheel would not spare him. He runs to Brahma and Siva respectively, but both decline to intervene, in deference to Sri Hari. Finally the sage approaches Sri Hari Himself, only to be told, "I am obliged to My devotees. They are My soul and I am theirs. If you go to Ambarisha he will save you." Left with no alternative, the sage rushes to Ambarisha and falls at his feet. The king is moved with pity and in the name of all the goodness to his credit prays the Wheel to withdraw. The *Chakra* cools down and the sage is saved. The sage showers his blessings on the king and wonders at the magnanimity of Sri Hari's devotees. The story provides a lesson on the highest example of forgiveness. It may be interesting to note that between the sage's flying and his return, a year elapses, during which the king takes no food at all, and on his return the king treats him to food and then with the permission of the sage breaks his year-old fast.

43. After mentioning several other illustrious kings Sri Suka narrates the descent of the holy Ganga to our world. By the wrath of the sage Kapila the sixty thousand sons of King Sagara are burnt to ashes. His grandson Amsuman and great-grandson Dilipa successively do penance with a view to getting down the Ganga for redeeming them. Both of them die before achieving the result. Dilipa's son, Bhagiratha, by severe penance pleases the goddess Ganga and at his prayer the holy water comes down. At the mere touch of the holy Ganga the sixty thousand sons of Sagara are redeemed and they go to heaven. Sri Suka tells King Parikshit, "This is no wonder, considering the origin of the holy river from the lotus-like feet of Sri Hari."

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44. Sri Suka then narrates with a rare eloquence the story of Sri Rama in two chapters. Ramayana is too familiar to need a summary here.

45. The story of Parasurama, another incarnation of the Lord, is also told in this *Skandha*. For the reason that His father, the sage Jamadagni, is killed by the sons of Arjuna, king of the Haihayas, Parasurama with a vengeance virtually exterminates the Kshatriya race, and finally, after restoring His father to life, lays down His weapon and goes to the Mahendra Hills where He is still doing penance.

46. Another interesting story appearing in the *Skandha* is that of King Yayati who marries Devayani, daughter of Sukracharya, and Sarmishta, daughter of King Vrishaparva. As the king's contact with the latter is contrary to the understanding with Sukracharya, the sage curses him with premature old age. However, on the king's pleading, the sage confers on him the capacity to acquire another's youthfulness in return for his impotence, with mutual consent. The king asks each one of his five sons for the mutual transfer, which the first four decline and the youngest son, Pooru, agrees to. The king is thus enabled to enjoy his life again with Devayani. However, after a long period of enjoyment the king realises the emptiness of sensual pleasures and resolves upon renunciation. He advises Devayani indirectly by telling her a story of two goats, one male and the other female, which was analogous to their own. He then entrusts the kingdom to his sons and goes to the forest, where by fervent prayer and meditation on Sri Hari he attains the Lord's State. The story illustrates the insatiability of worldly pleasures and the need for determined effort to cut off from them.

47. Sri Suka goes on to the dynasty of King Pooru to which King Parikshit belongs. Among several distinguished names a brief reference is made to King Dushyanta, his marriage with Sakuntala and to their son Bharata of great renown, a partial incarnation of Sri Hari.

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48. Then follows the story of the famous King Rantideva who is known for his fellow-feeling. On one occasion after a 48 days' fast, when he is about to take his food, first a Brahmin guest, then a *Sudra* and thirdly another one with a few dogs come to him, hungry and requesting for food. Rantideva sees Hari in all beings and distributes to the guests whatever food he has. All that is left with him is a little water, when an outcaste with a parching throat cries out for water. Rantideva at once feels, "I do not care for an empire, heaven or eternal bliss. Let me be in a position to relieve the sufferings of each and every being. My own hunger, thirst, exhaustion and all sorrows will disappear by my sparing this water to the dying creature." He then gives the water left with him to the outcaste. The Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva appear before Rantideva for conferring boons, but Rantideva is not in need of any and thanks Them. The moral of this one story is enough to rid the world of its wars, the so-called scarcities and many other sufferings.

49. In the closing chapters of the *Skandha* Sri Suka mentions some of the eminent personages of more recent times. Among the more famous and familiar names are those of King Santanu, his sons Bhishma, Chitrangada and Vichitravirya; Dhritarashtra, Pandu, Vidura, Duryodhana, Yudhishtira and his four brothers Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva; Karna and Abhimanyu, father of King Parikshit. The sage also refers to the dynasty of Yadu, the eldest son of King Yayati, and traces it down to Devaka, the maternal grandfather of Krishna; Ugrasena, father of Kamsa; Kunti, Vasudeva etc. He also mentions the names of the eight sons born to Vasudeva and Devaki, of whom Krishna is the eighth, and their daughter Subhadra, grandmother of King Parikshit. The sage ends the *Skandha* with an epitome of Sri Krishna's life in a few lines, which Adi Sesha with his one thousand tongues cannot exhaust if He sings eternally.

50. *Skandha X*: After hearing the beautiful stories of several illustrious kings of the solar and the lunar races

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and the wondrous tale of Krishna told in a nutshell, King Parikshit with animated curiosity requests Sri Suka, in the beginning of the Tenth *Skandha*, to narrate in detail the story of Krishna, the Guardian Angel of his forefathers, the Pandavas, his own Saviour from the missile of Aswatthama while yet in his mother's womb and the Supreme Controller of the destinies of all beings.

51. With equally enlivened interest and reverence the sage begins to pour out the 'nectar' which still rings sweet in our ears. After a brief reference to the circumstances leading to the Lord's incarnation as Krishna, Sri Suka recounts the mariage of Vasudeva and Devaki, Kamsa's apprehension of his end by the eighth son of Devaki, the birth of her first six children and their disposal by Kamsa and the transfer of the seventh one (Balarama who is none else than Lord Ananta) by Sri Hari's *Yoga Maya* from Devaki's womb to that of Rohini, another wife of Vasudeva residing in Nanda-Gokula. Sri Hari then enters the mind of Vasudeva who transmits Him to Devaki. Kamsa, ever haunted by the idea of his death at the hands of the eighth son of Devaki, imprisons her and Vasudeva. Brahma, Siva, Narada and other sages and the gods praise Sri Hari in His "mother's womb"!

52. In an auspicious moment Sri Hari manifests Himself as a son born to Devaki. Vasudeva and Devaki see 'their' marvellous 'child' having four arms, a Conch, a Mace and a Wheel, with the mark of Srivatsa on His bosom, the Koustubha jewel shining around His neck, a splendid crown, dazzling earrings and other gorgeous ornaments. They praise the Lord. Sri Hari reassures His 'parents' and instructs them to transfer Him to Yasoda's bed in Gokula and in His place take from there His *Yoga Maya* that is 'newy born' to Yasoda. He then transforms Himself into an ordinary child. Vasudeva acts as instructed, unfettered and unnoticed by any, thanks to Sri Hari's *Maya*, and the scene again remains as before except for the addition of a new-born babe.

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53. As soon as Kamsa comes to know that the eighth child of Devaki is born, he hurries to the spot, snatches the child from "its mother's" arms and is about to dash it on a stone, but the goddess that is the child escapes from his hands and mockingly tells him that his death flourishes elsewhere. Kamsa, befooled, consults his evil advisers and plans to kill his enemy, Krishna. With this end in view he orders his agents to kill all infants.

54. On the other side, Gokula is gay with festive celebrations on the birth of a 'son' to Nanda.

55. As ordered by Kamsa several demons go about in disguise to kill Krishna, but from His very infancy Krishna demonstrates that part of his mission in the world is the annihilation of wickedness. In the first round He kills the demons Pootana, Sakata and Trinavarta.

56. The first part of the Tenth *Skandha* deals mostly with the early life of Krishna up to the end of Kamsa. For the sake of convenience, if not in the order of events, we may divide this part into three main aspects viz. (1) Krishna's sporting activities and episodes with the *gopis*, (2) His manifestation of the superhuman element and sometimes as the Supreme Being and (3) His destruction of the wicked and incidentally the protection of the good. It will, however, be observed that the one is not altogether distinct from the others: they are often intertwined. While Krishna sports He will reveal His divinity; while manifesting Himself as the Supreme Being He may be playing; and in His destruction of the *Asuras* will be inherent both frolic and divineness. Such is Krishna.

57. To take up the first, Krishna provides much fun and delight to the people of Gokula by His childish pranks. He enters any house He likes, indulges in cat-burglaries, eats and drinks butter, curds etc. and supplies them to His companions and monkeys — all His "friends" — breaks the vessels if they are found empty, lets out the calves at untimely hours and commits nuisance in neat and tidy premises; and if ever questioned by any He would retort ,"this is my house; mind your business"; and all the while ap-

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parently He will be resting on His mother's lap like a good boy. With all this He wins their hearts and commands their awe and admiration; He is the very idol of Gokula.

56. Krishna mingles and plays so freely with the cowherd boys that even Brahma envies the good fortune of the entire Gokula and Vrindavana including the birds, animals, shrubs and creepers. At the hearing of His enchanting flute the *gopis* forget themselves, their clothes, ornaments and homes. His 'Rasa' dance with the *gopis* during moonlit autum nights, His sudden disappearance from their midst, their passionate search for Him, their thoughts of Krishna, their talks on Krishna, their acting 'Krishna', the *Gopi-Gita*, His reappearance among them out-cupiding Cupid in beauty and charm, the *Yugala Gita*, the *Bhramara Gita* etc. simply raise us to rapture. The *gopis'* love for Krishna, which in other words means *bhakti*, is proverbial. Uddhava, one of the foremost among *bhaktas*, bows down to the *gopis* for their *bhakti*. Krishna Himself is so pleased with their devotion that He acknowledges He can never repay His debt to them.

59. Manifesting Himself as the Supreme Being is a child's play for Krishna. As stated in para 52 above He is a born Sri Hari. The very fact that He is able to kill such demons as Pootana and Trinavarta in a few days of His incarnation reveals the super-human element in Him. To disprove His alleged swallowing of dust He opens His mouth and His mother is astounded to see in it the whole Universe including Gokula and herself. She attempts to bind Him with a cord, but all the cords she is able to procure still fall short by two inches. At last He pities her and yields to her; she ties Him to a post, and when she is off He drags it between two trees and thus redeems Nalakubara and Manigriva, sons of Kubera standing as the trees, from the sage Narada's curse.

60. Brahma tries to test Krishna by hiding His companions and their calves. Krishna thereupon takes the form of each of the missing boys and calves to the minutest detail in complexion, voice, features, clothes etc. and

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manages for nearly a year without any one noticing the duplication; and one day He gives Brahma the satisfaction of seeing not only Himself, i.e. Krishna, but each one of the artificial boys and calves in the divine form of Sri Hari with four arms, a crown, yellow robes and all other paraphernalia. Brahma realises that even as a cowherd boy Krishna is the *Para Brahma* and praises Him eloquently — the famous *Brahma Stuti* as it is called.

61. Other similar instances are His holding of the Govardhana mountain as an umbrella for seven days and protecting His people from Indra's wrath and floods, Indra's apology and praise of Krishna, restoring of His 'father' from Varuna and Varuna praising Krishna, revealing of *Vaikunta* to the *gopas* who witness Krishna being praised therein by the *Vedas*, affording of a similar sight to Akrura in the Kalindi river and Akrura's praise, protection of His companions and cattle from the poison of Kaliya, the wild fire etc.

62. *Killing of the Asuras*: Besides those already mentioned in para 55, Krishna kills several other demons such as Vatsa, Baka, Agha (so called because of their disguise as a calf, stork and python respectively), Dhenuka, Arishta, Kesi, Vyoma, Chanura etc. and also Kamsa. He is accompanied by Balarama on most of these occasions and Balarama Himself kills some, for instance Pralamba, Mushtika and Kuta.

63. After killing Kamsa, Krishna liberates Vasudeva and Devaki from bondage, bows before them and consoles them. He undergoes formal tuition under the sage Sandipani and acquires all learning from him. In return He restores to His preceptor his child long lost, and the *guru* is mightily pleased and showers his blessings on Krishna. Krishna sends Uddhava to Gokula to convey His loving message to His foster parents, Nanda and Yasoda, and to His other acquaintances over there. He deputes Akrura to Hastinapura to enquire about the conduct of Dhritarashtra and his sons and the plight of the Pandavas. Here ends part I of the Tenth *Skandha*.

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64. *Skandha X*, Part II: To avenge the death of Kamsa his father-in-law Jarasandha, king of Magadha, leads a strong force against the *Yadavas*. Krishna and Balarama anihilate the whole army, but spare the life of Jarasandha on purpose. Jarasandha repeats his campaign seventeen times and on each occasion meets with the same fate.

65. While he is preparing for the next attack, Narada with an ulterior object instigates, Kala Yavana to besiege Mathura with a large army. Confronted with a double danger, Krishna constructs Dwaraka, a magnificent fort with luxurious palaces in mid-ocean, and, as if in fear of the enemy, transports His kith and kin overnight to Dwaraka, posts Balarama to guard the city and Himself flees. Yavana chases Krishna until he disturbs the royal sage Muchukunda from his rest and is burnt to ashes as a result of the boon conferred on Muchukunda by the gods.

66. Krishna appears before Muchukunda and offers him tempting favours. Muchukunda, however, declines to accept them in view of the inevitable bondage attached to them. He praises Krishna and seeks only unfailing *bhakti* towards Him. Krishna blesses Muchukunda, goes back to Mathura and routs Yavana's army.

67. Meanwhile, Jarasandha appears again with his army. This time Krishna and Balarama pretend to be afraid of the enemy and escape to Dwaraka. Jarasandha returns to his country with a feeling of triumph.

68. Proceeding, Sri Suka narrates to King Parikshit how Krishna marries Rukmini after foiling the attempts of Jarasandha and other friends of Sisupala and against the wishes of her brother Rukmi. He carries her off from Vidarbha and the wedding celebrations take place in Dwaraka with pomp and pageant.

69. Then follow a series of marriages. One after another Krishna marries Jambavati (daughter of Jambavan of Ramayana fame, who gives Him a tough fight before giving his daughter), Satyabhama, daughter of Satrajit,

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the owner of the coveted Syamantaka jewel, Kalindi, Mitravinda, Satya, Bhadra and Lakshmana. Then he kills the powerful Naraka and marries 16,000 princesses more — in all 16,008!

70. To test Rukmini's devotion Krishna once indulges in a joke with her, underrating Himself and advising her to retrace her steps and marry Sisupala or some other prince befitting her own rank and qualities. Rukmini takes Him seriously and rejoins cleverly. Krishna is pleased and is at pains to pacify her. Their bond is reinforced. Krishna says such unmeaning jokes with a loving wife are the greatest delights in private life.

71. Krishna enjoys His family life righteously and begets sons and grandsons (and perhaps daughters and grand-daughters, we are not sure). Still He is never subdued by His wives nor overwhelmed with the family.

72. There is an episode of the marriage of Aniruddha, grandson of Krishna, with Usha, daughter of Bana (son of Bali and a great devotee of Siva having 1,000 arms), and incidentally of a fight between Bana and party backed by Siva on the one side and the *Yadavas* backed by Krishna on the other. It ends well, and "all is well that ends well."

73. Krishna redeems Nriga, an illustrious king known for his gifts to Brahmins, but fallen to and enduring for long the life of a lizard in a dry well, owing to an error in one of his gifts. Nriga thanks Krishna and ascends to heaven in a *vimana*. Krishna in this context proclaims the greatness of Brahmins and emphasises the sacrosanctity of their property.

74. Poundraka, king of Karusha, desires to become Hari! He impersonates Krishna and demands that Krishna should relinquish His titles and paraphernalia in his favour or be prepared for a fight. Krishna accepts the challenge and kills him. However, constantly thinking of Krishna and impersonating Him, Poundraka (nicknamed Poundraka Vasudeva) attains union with Krishna. In this res-

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pect Krishna seems to be fond of acting often without rhyme or season!

75. Narada desires to witness Krishna's domestic life and visits several of His luxurious palaces. He is amazed to find Krishna in each house, engaged in diverse activities such as fondling children, 'worshipping God', playing with His wife, negotiating matrimonial alliances for sons and daughters, teaching children, social service, feeding the poor, contemplating along with His brother the welfare of the good, attending *puranas* and other religious discourses etc., just to mention a few only.

76. Krishna attends Yudhishtira's *Rajasuya* sacrifice. Incidentally He aids Bhima in killing the invincible Jarasandha, sets free the several kings kept by him under subjection and restores to them their respective kingdoms. Sisupala reviles Krishna when His name is proposed for the presiding honour in the *Rajasuya*. Krishna kills Sisupala (who also attains union with Krishna while all are gazing). Subsequently, Krishna also kills Salva, Viduratha and Dantavaktra.

77. Duryodhana envies Yudhishtira and his brothers in the *Rajasuya*. He faces a ridiculous situation and walks out. War sems to be imminent and Balarama who desires to be neutral goes on a pilgrimage.

78. Some of the holy places, rivers, and hills visited by Balarama are: Prabhasa, the Saraswati, Brahma Tirtha, Chakra Tirtha, the Yamuna, the Ganga, the Sarayu, the Naimisha forest, Pulahasrama, Gaya, the Mahendra hills, Sri Saila, Venkata (Tirupati, we believe), Kamakoshni, Kanchi, the Kaveri, Srirangam, Rameswaram, the Tamraparni, Kanyakumari, Anantapura (Trivandrum), the Keralas, Gokarna, and the Dandaka hills.

79. Sri Suka then narrates the story of Kuchela. A great devotee living in a state of utter poverty and with a large family, Kuchela at the instance of his dutiful wife goes to Dwaraka to see Krishna with a few handfuls of *prithuka* (rice parched and flattened) to be offered to Him.

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Krishna receives him warmly, embraces him with a brotherly affection and honours him as His Lord. Kuchela feels shy to take out his "grand offering", but Krishna snatches it from him and swallows it with a rare relish. He cares more for the spirit in which a thing is offered than for its material value. Kuchela spends that night in heavenly bliss and leaves the next morning, none the richer. Proceeding, he finds his cottage turned into a super-Dwaraka studded with gold and diamonds, with a number of attendants richly dressed and ornamented and his wife looking like Goddess Lakshmi greeting him. Kuchela, however, enjoys his riches with moderation and added devotion to Krishna. Krishna's reverence for Brahmins is exemplified in this story. He is truly called a *Brahmanyadeva.*

80. On the occasion of a solar eclipse Krishna and the Yadavas go to the holy Kurukshetra. People from all parts of the country congregate there on the auspicious occasion. Nanda, Yasoda and other *gopas* and *gopis* also attend; so also Kunti, Bhishma, Drona, Dhritarashtra and others. They enjoy pleasant exchanges of stories and old reminiscences. Incidentally, Krishna imparts knowledge to the *gopis,* who by constant meditation on Krishna ultimately attain Him. Also an interesting conversation takes place between Draupadi and the consorts of Krishna, each one of whom narrates the circumstances of her marriage with Krishna. Several illustrious sages including Narada, Vyasa, Viswamitra, Vasishta, Agastya and Parasurama also visit the place. Krishna honours and praises the sages; the sages reciprocate.

81. Krishna and Balarama impart knowledge to their father, Vasudeva. Devaki expresses a desire to see her six children killed by Kamsa in their infancy. Krishna and Balarama go to Sutala where Mahabali lives (*vide* para 39). Bali receives them with due honours and presents the lost children. Krishna and Balarama return with them. Devaki suckles the children. Instantly they

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rise and bow before their parents as well as Krishna and Balarama and ascend to heaven.

82. Krishna goes to Mithila. The king of Mithila as well as a Brahmin by name Srutadeva invites Krishna. To please both the devotees, Krishna duplicates Himself and accompanied by several sages simultaneously visits both their places, the duplication being unnoticed by either of them. Krishna imparts Knowledge to both of them and returns to Dwaraka.

83. King Parikshit asks Sri Suka how the *Vedas* which deal with actions and qualities treat the Abstract, Infinite, Supreme being. The sage, in reply, refers to an ancient conversation between the sages Narada and Narayana, in which the latter in the presence of several sages quotes another old discourse on the subject. This contains what is known as the great "Veda Stuti."

84. Sri Suka concludes the Tenth *Skandha* with an epitome of Krishna's activities and a reference to the immensity of the growth of Krishna's family.

85. *Skandha XI*: In reply to Vasudeva's request for advice, the sage Narada quotes a conversation between King Nimi of Videha and the sons of Rishabha — the sages Kavi, Hari, Antariksha, Prabuddha, Pippalayana, Avirhotra, Drumila, Chamasa and Karabhajana. The discourses are highly philosophical and instructive and include the qualities of a '*bhagavata*' and a brief narration of the various incarnations of the Lord.

86. Then follows a fairly long discourse between Uddhava and Krishna during the last moments of Krishna on earth. Krishna imparts the Supreme Knowledge to Uddhava, citing various anecdotes and parables explaining the paths of *bhakti*, *gnana* and *karma* according to one's stages, the duties of *Brahmacharin, Grihastha, Vanaprastha* and *Yati*, the value of *sadhu sanga*, the causes of bondage and the means of Liberation, the superiority of *bhakti yoga* etc. — in a word, what is known as 'Bhagavata' (*vide* para 2 of the Introductory).

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87. Viewing with concern the stupendous growth of His family which none else can control, Krishna designs its liquidation under the guise of a sages' curse. The members of the family, under the influence of an intoxicant, fight among themselves and kill one another. Balarama enters *Yoga* and leaves the world. Finally, Krishna too makes a glorious exit amidst the praises of Brahma, Siva, Indra, the gods and the sages, shower of flowers, divine trumpets, music and dance.

88. Hearing the above news, Vasudeva, Devaki, Rohini, Ugrasena, Rukmini and others also end their lives. The Pandavas also leave *en route* to heaven, installing Parikshit on the throne.

89. *Skandha XII*: Sri Suka mentions the names of the future kings, the dynasties of the subsequent rulers and the growth of evil in the *Kali* Age at the end of which the Lord will incarnate Himself as Kalki, destroy the wicked rulers and establish peace in the world and the *Krita Yuga* will start again.

90. The sage winds up his seven-day discourse of Bhagavata with a valedictory advice to the king on *Para Brahman*. The king thanks Sri Suka for showing him the path to Sri Hari and seeks his blessing. The sage blesses him and leaves the scene.

91. Parikshit's doubts have been cleared and fears dispelled. He has realised the Supreme Being and by concentrated meditation he attains Sri Hari. The serpent Takshaka, however, bites his body as ordained and the body is burnt by the strong poison. Celestial bands, music and dance and shower of flowers mark the occasion as of Sri Krishna's exit.

93. Suta concludes his discourse with an index of the contents of Srimad Bhagavata. He also mentions the names of all the 18 *purnas* with the number of *slokas* in each and extols the Bhagavata above all. The Book ends with a prayer to Sri Hari, the very utterance of Whose name redeems all sins and leads to Eternal Bliss.

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IV

श्री भागवतरत्नावली

श्रीगणेशाय नमः। श्रीगोपालकृष्णाय नमः।
श्रीगुरुभ्यो नमः। ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय
सत्यं परं धीमहि ।।

१. श्रीमद्भागवतमाहात्म्यम्

ऋषिभिर्बहवो लोके पन्थानः प्रकटीकृताः।
श्रमसाध्याश्च ते सर्वे प्रायः स्वर्गफलप्रदाः ।। १ ।।
वैकुण्ठसाधकः पन्थाः स तु गोप्यो हि वर्तते।
तस्योपदेष्टा पुरुषः प्रायो भाग्येन लभ्यते ।। २ ।।
इदं भागवतं नाम पुराणं ब्रह्मसंमितम्।
भक्तिज्ञानविरागाणां स्थापनाय प्रकाशितम् ।। ३ ।।
इदं भगवता पूर्वं ब्रह्मणे नाभिपङ्कजे।
स्थिताय भवभीताय कारुण्यात्संप्रकाशितम् ।। ४ ।।
सर्ववेदान्तसारं यद्ब्रह्मात्मैकत्वलक्षणम्।
वस्त्वद्वितीयं तन्निष्ठं कैवल्यैकप्रयोजनम् ।। ५ ।।
एतस्मादपरं किंचिन्मनः शुद्धयै न विद्यते।
जन्मान्तरे भवेत्पुण्यं तदा भागवतं लभेत् ।। ६ ।।
धर्मः प्रोज्झितकैतवोऽत्र परमो निर्मत्सराणां सतां
वेद्यं वास्तवमत्र वस्तु शिवदं तापत्रयोन्मूलनम्।
श्रीमद्भागवते महामुनिकृते किंवा परैरीश्वरः
सद्यो हृद्यवरुध्यतेऽत्र कृतिभिः शुश्रूषुभिस्तत्क्षणात् ।। ७ ।।
श्रीमद्भागवतं पुराणतिलकं यद्वैष्णवानां धनं
यस्मिन् पारमहंस्यमेकममलं ज्ञानं परं गीयते।
यत्र ज्ञानविरागभक्तिसहितं नैष्कर्म्यमाविष्कृतं
तच्छृण्वन् प्रपठन् विचारणपरो भक्त्या विमुच्येन्नरः ।।८ ।।
स्वर्गे सत्ये च कैलासे वैकुण्ठे नास्त्ययं रसः।
अतः पिबन्तु सद्भाग्या मा मा मुञ्चत कर्हिचित् ।। ९ ।।

इति प्रथमः सरः।

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२. राजप्रार्थना

राजोवाच ।
अहो वयं धन्यतमा नृपाणां महत्तमानुग्रहणीयशीलाः ।
राज्ञां कुलं ब्राह्मणपादशौचाद्राद्धिसृष्टं बत गर्ह्यकर्म ।। १ ।।
तस्यैव मेऽघस्य परावरेशो व्यासक्तचित्तस्य गृहेष्वभीक्ष्णम् ।
निर्वेदमूलो द्विजशापरूपो यत्र प्रसक्तो भयमाशु धत्ते ।। २ ।।
अद्यैव राज्यं बलमृद्धकोशं प्रकोपितब्रह्मकुलानलो मे ।
दहत्वभद्रस्य पुनर्न मेऽभूत् पापीयसी धीर्द्विजदेवगोभ्यः ।। ३ ।।
ततश्च वः पृच्छ्यमिमं विपृच्छे विश्रभ्य विप्रा इतिकृत्यतायाम् ।
सर्वात्मना म्रियमाणैश्च कृत्यं शुद्धं च तत्राऽमृशताभियुक्ताः ।। ४ ।।
तं मोपयातं प्रतियन्तु विप्रा गङ्गा च देवी धृतचित्तमीशे ।
द्विजोपसृष्टः कुहकस्तक्षको वा दशत्वलं गायत विष्णुगाथाः ।।५ ।।
यच्छ्रृण्वतोऽपैत्यरतिर्वितृष्णा सत्त्वं च शुद्ध्यत्यचिरेण पुंसः ।
भक्तिर्हरौ तत्पुरुषे च सख्यं तदेव हारं बद मन्यसे चेत् ।। ६ ।।
सा वाग्यया तस्य गुणान् गृणीते करौ च तत्कर्मकरौ मनश्च ।
स्मरेद्वसन्तं स्थिरजङ्गमेषु शृणोति तत्पुण्यकथाः स कर्णः ।।७ ।।
शिरस्तु तस्योभयलिङ्गमानमेत्तदेव यत्पश्यति तद्धि चक्षुः ।
अङ्गानि विष्णोरथ तज्जनानां पादोदकं यानि भजन्ति नित्यम् ।। ८ ।।
पुनश्च भूयाद्भगवत्यनन्ते रतिः प्रसङ्गश्च तदाश्रयेषु ।
महत्सु यां यामुपयामि सृष्टिं मैत्र्यस्तु सर्वत्र नमो द्विजेभ्यः ।। ९ ।।

इति द्वितीयः सरः ।

३. श्री शुकप्रत्यर्चनं, मङ्गलाचरणं च

श्रीशुक उवाच ।
सम्यग्व्यवसिता बुद्धिस्तव राजर्षिसत्तम ।
वासुदेवकथायां ते यज्जाता नैष्ठिकी रतिः ।। १ ।।
वासुदेवकथाप्रश्नः पुरुषांस्त्रीन् पुनाति हि ।
वक्तारं पृच्छकं श्रोतॄन् तत्पादसलिलं यथा ।। २ ।।
नमः परस्मै पुरुषाय भूयसे सदुद्भवस्थाननिरोधलीलया ।
गृहीतशक्तित्रितयाय देहिनामन्तर्भवायानुपलक्ष्यवर्त्मने ।। ३ ।।

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यत्कीर्तनं यत्स्मरणं यदीक्षणं यद्वन्दनं यच्छ्रवणं यदर्हणम् ।
लोकस्य सद्यो विधुनोति कल्मषं तस्मै सुभद्रश्रवसे नमो नमः ॥ ४ ॥
किरातहूणान्ध्रपुलिन्दपुल्कसा आभीरकंका यवनाःखसादयः ।
येऽन्ये च पापा यदुपाश्रयाश्रयाः शुध्यन्ति तस्मै प्रभविष्णवे नमः ॥ ५ ॥
श्रियः पतिर्यज्ञपतिः प्रजापतिर्धियां पतिर्लोकपतिर्धरापतिः ।
पतिर्गतिश्चान्धकवृष्णिसात्वतां प्रसीदतां मे भगवान् सतां पतिः ॥ ६ ॥
यदंघ्र्यनुध्यानसमाधिधौतया धियाऽनुपश्यन्ति हि तत्त्वमात्मनः ॥
वदन्ति चैतत्कवयो यथारुचं स मे मुकुन्दो भगवान् प्रसीदताम् ॥ ७ ॥
प्रचोदिता येन पुरा सरस्वती वितन्वताऽजस्य सतीं स्मृतिं हृदि ।
स्वलक्षणा प्रादुरभूत् किलाऽस्यतः स मे ऋषीणामृषभः प्रसीदताम् ॥ ८ ॥
भूतैर्महद्भिर्य इमाः पुरो विभुर्निर्माय शेते यदमूषु पूरुषः ।
भुङ्क्ते गुणान् षोडश षोडशात्मकः सोऽलंकृषीष्ट भगवान् वचांसि मे ॥ ९ ॥

इति तृतीयः सरः ।

४. साधनसोपानम्

दुर्लभो मानुषो देहो देहिनां क्षणभंगुरः ।
तत्रापि दुर्लभं मन्ये वैकुण्ठप्रियदर्शनम् ॥ १ ॥
तुलयाम लवेनापि न स्वर्गं नापुनर्भवम् ।
भगवत्सङ्गिसङ्गस्य मर्त्यानां किमुताऽशिषः ॥ २ ॥
ममोत्तमश्लोकजनेषु सख्यं संसारचक्रे भ्रमतः स्वकर्मभिः ॥
त्वन्मायया ऽऽत्मात्मजदारगेहेष्वासक्तचित्तस्य न नाथ भूयात् ॥ ३ ॥
यत्र भागवता राजन् साधवो विशदाशयाः ।
भगवद्गुणानुकथनश्रवणव्यग्रचेतसः ॥ ४ ॥
तस्मिन्महन्मुखरिता मधुभिच्चरित्रपीयूषशेषसरितः परितः स्रवन्ति ।
ता ये पिबन्त्यवितृषो नृप गाढकर्णैस्तान्न स्पृशन्त्यशनतृड्भयशोकमोहाः ॥ ५ ॥
यत्रोत्तमश्लोकगुणानुवादः प्रस्तूयते ग्राम्यकथाविघातः ।
निषेव्यमाणोऽनुदिनं मुमुक्षोर्मतिं सतीं यच्छति वासुदेवे ॥ ६ ॥
शृण्वतः श्रद्दधानस्य वासुदेवकथारुचिः ।
स्यान्महत्सेवया विप्राः पुण्यतीर्थनिषेवणात् ॥ ७ ॥

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महत्सेवां द्वारमाहुर्विमुक्ते स्तमोद्वारं योषितां सङ्गिसङ्गम् ।
महान्तस्ते समचित्ताः प्रशान्ता विमन्यवः सुहृदः साधवो ये ।। ८ ।।
धर्मं भजस्व सततं त्यज लोकधर्मान् सेवस्व साधुपुरुषान् जहि कामतृष्णाम् ।
अन्यस्य दोषगुणचिन्तनमाशु मुक्त्वा सेवाकथारसमहो नितरां पिब त्वम् ।। ९ ।।

इति चतुर्थः सरः ।

५. भगवदवतारः

यदा यदेह धर्मस्य क्षयो वृद्धिश्च पाप्मनः ।
तदा तु भगवानीश आत्मानं सृजते हरिः ।। १ ।।
अवतारा ह्यसंख्येया हरेः सत्त्वनिधेर्द्विजाः ।
यथाऽविदासिनः कुल्याः सरसः स्युः सहस्रशः ।। २ ।।
ऋषयो मनवो देवा मनुपुत्रा महौजसः ।
कलाः सर्वे हरेरेव सप्रजापतयस्तथा ।।३।।
एते चांशकलाः पुंसः कृष्णस्तु भगवान् स्वयम् ।
इन्द्रारिव्याकुलं लोकं मृडयन्ति युगे युगे ।। ४ ।।
नमः कारणमत्स्याय प्रलयाब्धिचराय च ।
हयशीर्ष्णे नमस्तुभ्यं मधुकैटभमृत्यवे ।। ५ ।।
अकूपाराय बृहते नमो मन्दरधारिणे ।
क्षित्युद्धारविहाराय नमः सूकरमूर्तये ।। ६ ।।
नमस्तेऽद्भुतसिंहाय साधुलोकभयापह ।
वामनाय नमस्तुभ्यं क्रान्तत्रिभुवनाय च । ७ ।।
नमो भृगूणां पतये दृप्तक्षत्रक्नच्छिदे ।
नमस्ते रघुवर्याय रावणान्तकराय च ।। ८ ।।
मत्स्याश्वकच्छपनृसिंहवराहहंसराजन्यविप्रविबुधेषु कृतावतारः ।
त्वं पासि नस्त्रिभुवनं च यथाऽधुनेश भारं भुवो हर यदूत्तम वन्दनं ते ।। ९ ।।

इति पंचमः सरः ।

६. भगवद्रूपाणि

जगृहे पौरुषं रूपं भगवान् महदादिभिः ।
संभूतं षोडशकलमादौ लोकसिसृक्षया ।। १ ।।

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यस्यावयवसंस्थानैः कल्पितो लोकविस्तरः ।
तद्वै भगवतो रूपं विशुद्धं सत्त्वमूर्जितम् ।। २ ।।
पश्यन्त्यदो रूपमदभ्रचक्षुषा सहस्रपादोरुभुजाननाद्भुतम् ।
सहस्रमूर्धश्रवणाक्षिनासिकं सहस्रमौल्यंबरकुण्डलोल्लसत् ।। ३ ।।
एवं सहस्रवदनांघ्रिशिरःकरोरुनासास्यकर्णनयनाभरणायुधाढचम् ।
मायामयं सदुपलक्षितसन्निवेशं दृष्ट्वा महापुरुषमाप मुदं विरिञ्चः ।। ४ ।।
तिर्यङ्नगद्विजसरीसृपदेवदैत्यमर्त्यादिभिः परिचितं सदसद्विशेषम् ।
रूपं स्थविष्ठमज ते महदाद्यनेकं नातः परं परम वेद्मि न यत्र वादः ।। ५ ।।
खं वायुमग्निं सलिलं महीं च ज्योतींषि सत्त्वानि दिशो द्रुमादीन् ।
सरित्समुद्रांश्च हरेः शरीरं यत्किं च भूतं प्रणमेदनन्यः ।। ६ ।।
तमद्भुतं बालकमंबुजेक्षणं चतुर्भुजं शंखगदार्युदायुधम् ।
श्रीवत्सलक्ष्मं गलशोभिकौस्तुभं पीतांबरं सान्द्रपयोदसौभगम् ।। ७ ।।
महार्हवैडूर्यकिरीटकुण्डलत्विषा परिष्वक्तसहस्रकुन्तलम् ।
उद्दामकांच्यंगदकंकणादिभिर्विरोचमानं वसुदेव ऐक्षत ।। ८ ।।
रूपे इमे सदसती तव वेदसृष्टे बीजांकुराविव न चान्यदरूपकस्य ।
युक्ताः समक्षमुभयत्र विचिन्वते त्वां योगेन वह्निमिव दारुषु नान्यतः स्यात् ।।९।।

इति षष्ठः सरः ।

७. उपदेशसंग्रहः ।

अहमेवासमेवाग्रे नान्यद्यत्सदसत्परम् ।
पश्चादहं यदेतच्च योऽवशिष्येत सोऽस्म्यहम् ।। १ ।।
अहमात्मान्तरो बाह्योऽनावृतः सर्वदेहिनाम्
यथा भूतानि भूतेषु बहिरन्तः स्वयं तथा ।। २ ।।
अहं भवान्न चान्यस्त्वं त्वमेवाहं विचक्ष्व भोः ।
न नौ पश्यन्ति कवयः छिद्रं जातु मनागपि ।। ३ ।।
सर्वभूतेषु चात्मानं सर्वभूतानि चात्मनि ।
ईक्षेतानन्यभावेन भूतेष्विव तदात्मताम् ।। ४ ।।
परस्वभावकर्माणि न प्रशंसेन्न गर्हयेत् ।
विश्वमेकात्मकं पश्यन् प्रकृत्या पुरुषेण च ।। ५ ।।
अर्थे ह्यविद्यमानेऽपि संसृतिर्न निवर्तते ।
ध्यायतो विषयानस्य स्वप्नेऽनर्थागमो यथा ।। ६ ।।

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विषयान् ध्यायतश्चित्तं विषयेषु विषज्जते ।
मामनुस्मरतश्चित्तं मय्येव प्रविलीयते ।। ७ ।।
वाचं यच्छ मनो यच्छ प्राणान् यच्छेन्द्रियाणि च ।
आत्मानमात्मना यच्छ न भूयः कल्पसेऽध्वने ।। ८ ।।
कायेन वाचा मनसेन्द्रियैर्वा बुध्याऽत्मना वाऽनुसृतस्वभावात् ।
करोति यद्यत्सकलं परस्मै नारायणायेति समर्पयेत्तत् ।। ९ ।।

इति सप्तमः सरः ।

८. उत्तमभागवतः

सर्वभूतेषु यः पश्येत् भगवद्भावमात्मनः ।
भूतानि भगवत्यात्मन्येष भागवतोत्तमः ।। १ ।।
गृहीत्वापीन्द्रियैरर्थान् यो न द्वेष्टि न हृष्यति ।
विष्णोर्मायामिदं पश्यन् स वै भागवतोत्तमः ।। २ ।।
देहेन्द्रियप्राणमनोधियां यो जन्माप्ययक्षुद्भयतर्षकृच्छ्रैः ।
संसारधर्मैरविमुह्यमानः स्मृत्या हरेर्भागवतप्रधानः ।। ३ ।।
न कामकर्मबीजानां यस्य चेतसि संभवः ।
वासुदेवैकनिलयः स वै भागवतोत्तमः ।। ४ ।।
न यस्य जन्मकर्मभ्यां न वर्णाश्रमजातिभिः ।
सज्जतेऽस्मिन्नहंभावो देहे वै स हरेः प्रियः ।। ५ ।।
त्रिभुवनविभवहेतवेऽप्यकुण्ठस्मृतिरजितात्मसुरादिभिर्विमृग्यात् ।
न चलति भगवत्पदारविन्दाल्लवनिमिषार्धमपि यः स वैष्णवाग्र्यः ।। ६ ।।
विसृजति हृदयं न यस्य साक्षाद्धरिरवशाभिहितोऽप्यघौघनाशः ।
प्रणयरशनया धृताङ्घ्रिपद्मः स भवति भागवतप्रधान उक्तः ।। ७।।
मुक्तानामपि सिद्धानां नारायणपरायणः ।
सुदुर्लभः प्रशान्तात्मा कोटिष्वपि महामुने ।। ८ ।।
नारायणपराः सर्वे न कुतश्चन बिभ्यति ।
स्वर्गापवर्गनरकेष्वपि तुल्यार्थदर्शिनः ।। ९ ।।

इत्यष्टमः सरः ।

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९. भक्तियोगः

श्रवणं कीर्तनं विष्णोः स्मरणं पादसेवनम् ।
अर्चनं वन्दनं दास्यं सख्यमात्मनिवेदनम् ।। १ ।।
इति पुंसार्पिता विष्णौ भक्तिश्चेन्नवलक्षणा ।
क्रियते भगवत्यद्धा तन्मन्येऽधीतमुत्तमम् ।। २ ।।
अकामः सर्वकामो वा मोक्षकाम उदारधीः ।
तीव्रेण भक्तियोगेन यजेत पुरुषं परम् ।। ३ ।।
एतावानेव लोकेऽस्मिन् पुंसां निःश्रेयसोदयः ।
तीव्रेण भक्तियोगेन मनो मय्यर्पितं स्थिरम् ।। ४ ।।
न साधयति मां योगो न सांख्यं धर्म उद्धव ।
न स्वाध्यायस्तपस्त्यागो यथा भक्तिर्ममोर्जिता ।। ५ ।।
भक्त्याऽहमेकया ग्राह्यः श्रद्धयाऽऽत्मा प्रियः सताम्
भक्तिः पुनाति मन्निष्ठा श्वपाकानपि संभवात् ।। ६ ।।
केवलेन हि भावेन गोप्यो गावो नगा मृगाः ।
येऽन्ये मूढधियो नागाः सिद्धा मामीयुरञ्जसा ।। ७ ।।
न पारमेष्ठ्यं न महेन्द्रधिष्ण्यं न सार्वभौमं न रसाधिपत्यम् ।
न योगसिद्धीरपुनर्भवं वा मय्यर्पितात्मेच्छति मद्विनाऽन्यत् ।। ८ ।।
इत्यच्युतांघ्रिं भजतोऽनुवृत्त्या भक्तिर्विरक्तिर्भगवत्प्रबोधः
भवन्ति वै भागवतस्य राजंस्ततः परां शांतिमुपैति साक्षात् ।। ९ ।।

इति नवमः सरः ।

१०. भगवत्स्तवराजः

योऽन्तः प्रविश्य मम वाचिमिमां प्रसुप्तां संजीवयत्यखिलशक्तिधरः स्वधाम्ना ।
अन्यांश्च हस्तचरणश्रवणत्वगादीन् प्राणान्नमो भगवते पुरुषाय तुभ्यम् ।। १ ।।
यं ब्रह्मा वरुणेन्द्ररुद्रमरुतः स्तुन्वन्ति दिव्यैः स्तवै-
र्वेदैः साङ्गपदक्रमोपनिषदैर्गायन्ति यं सामगाः ।
ध्यानावस्थिततद्गतेन मनसा पश्यन्ति यं योगिनो
यस्यान्तं न विदुः सुरासुरगणा देवाय तस्मै नमः ।। २ ।।
सत्यव्रतं सत्यपरं त्रिसत्यं सत्यस्य योनिं निहितं च सत्ये ।
सत्यस्य सत्यमृतसत्यनेत्रं सत्यात्मकं त्वां शरणं प्रपन्नाः ।। ३ ।।

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एकस्त्वमात्मा पुरुषः पुराणः सत्यः स्वयंज्योतिरनन्त आद्यः ।
नित्योऽक्षरोऽजस्रसुखो निरंजनः पूर्णोऽद्वयो मुक्त उपाधितोऽमृतः ।। ४ ।।
योऽनुग्रहार्थं भजतां पादमूलमनामरूपो भगवाननन्तः ।
नामानि रूपाणि च जन्मकर्मभिर्भेजे स मह्यं परमः प्रसीदतु ।। ५ ।।
सत्त्वं रजस्तम इतीश तवाऽत्मबन्धो मायामयाः स्थितिलयोदयहेतवोऽस्य ।
लीला धृता यदपि सत्त्वमयी प्रशान्त्यै नान्ये नृणां व्यसनमोहभियश्च याभ्याम् ।।६।।
नैते गुणा न गुणिनो महदादयो ये सर्वे मनःप्रभृतयः सहदेवमर्त्याः ।
आद्यन्तवन्त उरुगाय विदन्ति हि त्वामेवं विमृश्य सुधियो विरमन्ति शब्दात् ।।७।।
तत्तेऽनुकम्पां सुसमीक्षमाणो भुंजान एवाऽत्मकृतं विपाकम् ।
हृद्वाग्वपुर्भिर्विदधन्नमस्ते जीवेत यो मुक्तिपदे स दायभाक् ।। ८ ।।
चिरमिह वृजिनार्तस्तप्यमानोऽनुतापैरवितृषषडमित्रोऽलब्धशान्तिः कथंचित् ।
शरणद समुपेतस्त्वत्पदाब्जं परात्मन्नभयमृतमशोकं पाहि माऽऽपन्नमीश ।। ९ ।।

इति दशमः सरः ।

११. अभयम्

वृथा खेदयसे बाले अहो चिन्तातुरा कथम् ।
श्रीकृष्णचरणांभोजं स्मर दुःखं गमिष्यति ।। १।।
आपन्नः संसृतिं घोरां यन्नाम विवशो गृणन् ।
ततः सद्यो विमुच्येत यद्बिभेति स्वयं भयम् ।। २ ।।
नोत्तमश्लोकवार्तानां जुषतां तत्कथामृतम् ।
स्यात्संभ्रमोऽन्तकालेऽपि स्मरतां तत्पदांबुजम् ।। ३ ।।
समाश्रिता ये पदपल्लवप्लवं महत्पदं पुण्ययशो मुरारेः ।
भवांबुधिर्वत्सपदं परं पदं पदं पदं यद्विपदां न तेषाम् ।। ४ ।।
देवर्षिभूताप्तनृणां पितॄणां न किंकरो नायमृणी च राजन् ।
सर्वात्मना यः शरणं शरण्यं गतो मुकुन्दं परिहृत्य कर्तम् ।। ५ ।।
स्वपादमूलं भजतः प्रियस्य त्यक्तान्यभावस्य हरिः परेशः ।
विकर्म यच्चोत्पतितं कथंचिद्धुनोति सर्वं हृदि सन्निविष्टः ।। ६ ।।
मर्त्यो यदा त्यक्तसमस्तकर्मा निवेदितात्मा विचिकीर्षितो मे ।
तदाऽमृतत्वं प्रतिपद्यमानो मयाऽत्मभूयाय च कल्पते वै ।। ७ ।।

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ज्ञानवैराग्ययुक्तेन भक्तियोगेन योगिनः ।
क्षेमाय पादमूलं मे प्रविशन्त्यकुतोभयम् ।। ८ ।।
नामसंकीर्तनं यस्य सर्वपापप्रणाशनम् ।
प्रणामो दुःखशमनस्तं नमामि हरिं परम् ।। ९ ।।

इत्येकादशः सरः ।

१२. अनुस्मृतिः

कस्मै येन विभासितोऽयमतुलो ज्ञानप्रदीपः पुरा
तद्रूपेण च नारदाय मुनये कृष्णाय तद्रूपिणा ।
योगीन्द्राय तदात्मनाऽथ भगवद्रातायं कारुण्यतस्तच्छुद्धं
विमलं विशोकममृतं सत्यं परं धीमहि ।। १ ।।
निगमकल्पतरोर्गलितं फलं शुकमुखादमृतद्रवसंयुतम् ।
पिबत भागवतं रसमालयं मुहुरहो रसिका भुवि भावुकाः ।। २ ।।
अत्र संकीर्तितः साक्षात् सर्वपापहरो हरिः ।
नारायणो हृषीकेशो भगवान् सात्वतां पतिः ।। ३ ।।
संकीर्त्यमानो भगवाननन्तः श्रुतानुभावो व्यसनं हि पुंसाम् ।
प्रविश्य चित्तं विधुनोत्यशेषं यथा तमोऽर्कोऽभ्रमिवातिवातः ।। ४ ।।
मृषा गिरस्ता ह्यसतीरसत्कथा न कथ्यते यद्भगवानधोक्षजः ।
तदेव सत्यं तदु हैव मङ्गलं तदेव पुण्यं भगवद्गुणोदयम् ।। ५ ।।
तदेव रम्यं रुचिरं नवं नवं तदेव शश्वन्मनसो महोत्सवम् ।
तदेव शोकार्णवशोषणं नृणां यदुत्तमश्लोकयशोऽनुगीयते ।। ६ ।।
यशःश्रियामेव परिश्रमः परो वर्णाश्रमाचारतपःश्रुतादिषु ।
अविस्मृतिः श्रीधरपादपद्मयोर्गुणानुवादश्रवणादिभिर्हरेः ।। ७ ।।
अविस्मृतिः कृष्णपदारविन्दयोः क्षिणोत्यभद्राणि शमं तनोति च ।
सत्त्वस्य शुद्धिं परमात्मभक्तिं ज्ञानं च विज्ञानविरागयुक्तम् ।। ८ ।।
नमोऽस्तु ते महायोगिन् प्रपन्नमनुशाधि माम् ।
यथा त्वच्चरणांभोजे रतिः स्यादनपायिनी ।। ९ ।।
इति श्रीभागवतरत्नावल्यां अनुस्मृतिर्नाम द्वादशः सरः ।

श्रीकृष्णार्पणम् ।

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V

TRANSLATION

NOTE: The translation is given against the serial number of the corresponding *sloka*. Indication of the context and/or other comments are given separately.

1. THE GREATNESS OF SRIMAD BHAGAVATA

The Sanaka Brothers say:

1. "The sages have advised various ways for our well-being such as austerities, sacrifices and penance. They are very difficult to perform and, at best, they lead to heaven. (The Gita and other scriptures say that when our *punyas* have been exhausted, the tenure in heaven will expire and we will be reverted to this mortal world. Is this worthwhile?)

2. "The way to Eternal Bliss is obscure. It is only by extraordinary good fortune that one gets a person who can reveal that path.

3. "The Bhagavata Purana is compared to the *Vedas*. It has been expounded for establishing *bhakti, gnana* and *vairagya*, the essentials for Eternal Bliss."

Suta says:

4. "This was originally revealed by *Bhagavan* Himself to Brahma the Creator, who, seated on the lotus sprung from the Lord's navel, dreaded the vortex of *samsara*.

5. "It is the quintessence of all *Vedanta*. It signifies the oneness of *Brahman* and the individual soul. It is unique and centres round the Supreme Reality. Its sole object: *Kaivalyam*.

6. "There is nothing better to purify the mind. It can be had only with lots of *punyas* acquired in past lives."

The sage Vyasa and Sri Suka:

7. "In this Srimad Bhagavata composed by the great sage Vyasa is expounded the supreme virtue of pure devo-

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tion to God without any kind of desires; herein is dealt with that Absolute Truth which can be known only by those who are free from malice, which eradicates all kinds of sufferings and bestows all good; Sri Hari enters the heart of the blessed ones the moment they only wish to hear It recited; what more is needed"?

Says Sri Suka again:

8. "Srimad Bhagavata occupies the pride of place among all the *puranas*. The devout cherish It as their Wealth. The burden of Its song is the Pure, Unique and Supreme Knowledge. It is the goal of the *Paramahamsas*. Therein is expounded *gnana*, *vairagya* and *bhakti* culminating in the renunciation of all worldly activities. Listening to, studying and pondering over It devoutly, one gets liberated.

9. "This nectar is not available in *Swarga*, *Satya* or *Kailasa*. Hence, lucky ones, enjoy it to the full. Never, never leave it."

2. THE KING'S PRAYER

The context: see Summary, para. 2.

The king had placed a dead snake on the sage Samika's person, for which the sage's son cursed that the serpent Takshaka would soon kill him. The king regrets his impudence and prays:

1. "Ah, I am the luckiest among kings, for in spite of my misconduct I have won the blessings of the most eminent souls, whereas the tribe of royalty, owing to their ignoble deeds, ought to stand even farther than where the *Brahmanas* are to wash their feet after easing themselves. (They are expected to do this at a distance.)

2. "Even the curse of the sage's son is like a blessing to me. *Bhagavan* Himself has visited me in the form of the curse, for to me, a sinner sunk in worldly pleasures, it has caused a horror of them.

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3. "Let the *Brahmana's* wrath immediately destroy my Kingdom, my forces and my rich exchequer — I am damned and do not deserve them. Let me never again think ill of the *Brahmanas*, the gods and cows.

4. "With full faith in you, learned sages, I beg to ask you this one question, viz., what is the right thing to do for man in any circumstance and, particularly, when he is at death's door? Kindly consider and advise.

5. "Believe me, sages, I have finally taken refuge in you and the holy Ganga, setting my heart on the Lord. Let Takshaka or any wily creature of the boy-sage kill me, I don't mind; but, meanwhile, please do sing the stories of the Lord."

After listening to Sri Suka intently for four days the king again requests him:

6. "Please continue the very stories of Sri Hari by listening to which man's unhappiness will disappear, as also his unworthy cravings; his mind will soon become pure and he will develop devotion to Sri Hari and delight in the company of His votaries."

On a later occasion, praising the activity of listening to the Lord's stories the king submits that, in fact, every organ and part of the body must be directed towards God.

7 and 8. "That alone which speaks of the Lord should be called speech; those alone are really hands, which are engaged in His service; the mind should ever think of the Lord manifested in all mobile and immobile creatures; that alone deserves the name 'ear', which listens to His sacred stories. The head must bow to all mobile and immobile creatures identifying them with God; that alone can be really called eye, which sees God in everything; the limbs will be worth the name only if they are daily besprinkled with the water with which the feet of the Lord and His devotees have been washed."

* * *

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9. "In whatever births I may take hereafter, may I revel in Lord Ananta; may I enjoy the company of His followers, the *Mahatmas;* may I have Universal friendship. Obeisance again to the *Brahmanas.*"

At that stage the king had not realised that he was not to have any more re-birth!

3. SRI SUKA'S COMPLIMENT AND INVOCATION

The sage compliments the king:

1 and 2. "Great Royal Sage, you are rightly resolved; you have got a passion for Lord Vasudeva's stories.

"The asking to tell Vasudeva's stories sanctifies three parties — the asker, the exponent and the audience — even as the Ganga issuing from His feet sanctifies the three worlds."

* * *

3 to 9. The Invocation.

3. "Obeisance to the Almighty of Infinite Glory Who, for His sport of creation, maintenance and liquidation of the universe, assumes three powers in the form of the three *Gunas, Rajas, Sattva* and *Tamas,* Who is the Self in all beings and Whose ways are inscrutable.

4. "Repeated obeisance to that Lord of excellent fame, by chanting Whose names, by remembering Whom, by seeing Whose image, by greeting Whom, by listening to Whose stories or by worshipping Whom people are instantly rid of all sins."

5. In this verse the sage names several lowest classes of people and avers that these and all other sinners will be redeemed by resorting to even the second line of devotees (devotees of devotees) of the Lord and says, "I bow down to that all-powerful Lord."

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The sage continues:

6. "May I have the grace of the Lord of *Sri*, the Lord of *yagnas*, the Protector of people, the Ruler of the senses, the Lord of the worlds, the Protector of the earth, the Principal and Protector of all the *Yadavas* and the Patron of the pious!

7. "Again, I seek the grace of Lord Mukunda, by meditating on Whose feet the seers are able to realise the true nature of the Self and explain it according to their own lights.

8. "May the Seer of all seers, prompted by Whom while enlightening the Creator with regard to his duty of creation in the beginning and from Whose mouth the goddess Saraswati emerged in full form, be pleased with me!

9. "I invoke that all-pervading Lord, Who, after creating all beings with the *mahabhutas*, indwells them and activates the sixteen components,* Himself being the soul of the sixteen, kindly to embellish my words."

4. STEPS TO THE GOAL

The verses in this series are uttered by different persons. There is some repetition of matter. The order of the "steps" is not strictly regular. Mainly the means to the end are:

(i) The human body;
(ii) Contact with saintly souls;
(iii) The desire to avail of and participate in their proceedings, how it arises;
(iv) Avoidance of the negatives —
Excessive attachment to the world, associating with sexy people, gossiping, etc.;
(v) Following the path of virtue, Resisting the thirst for worldly pleasures.

* (These are: the five senses of perception, the five organs of action, the mind and the five elements — earth, water, fire, air and ether.)

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King Nimi (Videha) submits to the *Navayogis*:

1. "To the soul taking innumerable bodies successively, the human body, though very short-lived, is extremely difficult to get; even there, still more difficult it is, I think, to come across a godly man."

How precious it is, the *Prachetas* acknowledge to *Bhagavan*:

2. "Even a moment's touch with devotees of the Lord is more than heaven or even *moksha*, what to talk of the blessings of the mortal world!"

Ref. Summary, para. 21.

In the sublime last prayer of the demon Vritra on the battlefield, he prays:

3. "Wandering along the endless circle of *Samsara* through my own actions, may I have friendship with Your devotees, O Praiseworthy Lord; deluded as I am by Your *Maya* and thus deeply attached to the body, family and possessions, may I no more have attachment to these!"

No less a person than the sage Narada commends *satsanga*. After explaining to King Prachinabarhis the allegory of the story of Puranjana, vide Summary, para 12, the sage says:

4 and 5. "King, where there are pious and pure-hearted *Bhagavatas* who are ever keen on recounting and listening to the Lord's exploits there will be copious flows all around of the nectar-like stories of *Madhusudana* from the mouths of enlightened souls, and those who with intent ears absorb them without content will never in the least experience hunger, thirst, fear, sorrow or delusion."

After defining *Gnanam* and asserting that there is no other means to attain It except service at the feet of *Mahatmas*, another *Gnani*, Jadabharata, tells another king, Raghugana, vide Summary, para. 17:

6. "Where such *Mahatmas* are present will take place repeated discourses on the virtues of *Bhagavan* which will

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ward off worthless worldly talks. Regular attendance of these discourses will afford to those who seek *moksha* (the highest *Purushartha*) sublime thoughts of Vasudeva (ultimately leading to Him)."

Says Suta (the mouth-piece of Vyasa):

7. "A person having faith and an interest develops a taste for the stories of Vasudeva by visiting holy places and serving *Mahatmas*."

Reference Summary, para. 14. God Rishabha advises His sons in the presence of great sages and His subjects:

8. "Serving of *Mahatmas* is a passport to liberation, whereas contact with womanisers leads to *samsara*. And *Mahatmas* are those who are calm, composed, free from anger, kind-hearted, saintly, etc."

Gokarna's final advice to his "father" Atmadeva:

9. "Follow always the righteous path, abandon worldly activities, serve the saintly, avoid the thirst for sensual pleasures, ignore the faults and merits of others and take delight in worshipping the Lord and listening to His stories." (Gokarna and Atmadeva are two characters in a story in the Padmapurana illustrating the greatness of Srimad Bhagavata.)

5. BHAGAVAN'S INCARNATIONS

The second and the fourth series stress the value of Bhagavan's stories. It is the incarnations of *Bhagavan* that provide the theme for the stories. This series refers to some of the incarnations.

Echoing what Sri Krishna has said in the Gita, Chapter IV-7, Sri Suka says:

1. "Whenever there is decline of righteousness and rise of wickedness in the world, *Bhagavan* Hari incarnates Himself."

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Suta adds:

2 to 4. "Innumerable are the incarnations of Hari, the storehouse of all virtues, even as brooks which branch out in thousands from a perennial stream. The sages, the Manus and their sons, the gods, the *Prajapatis* and, in fact, all who have extraordinary power are fractions of *Bhagavan*. All the aforesaid are part manifestations or rays of the Lord, whereas Sri Krishna is *Bhagavan* Himself. The Lord manifests Himself in these various forms from time to time and saves the worlds when they are oppressed by evil forces."

In the following verses some of the better-known incarnations are mentioned. Akrura gets a vision of *Bhagavan* in the Kalindi river and extols Him. *Inter alia,* he pays obeisance to these *avataras,* adding their essential attributes or activities.

5. (i) The *Matsya* (Fish), moved about on the *pralaya* waters (See Summary, para. 40).

(ii) *Hayagriva** (Horse-necked), killed the demons Madhu and Kaitabha.

*(Hayagriva is the name of an *asura* who is said to have stolen the *Vedas* and been killed by the Lord. Hayagriva is also the name of an *avatara,* in which He killed the demons Madhu and Kaitabha who are said to have wronged the *Vedas*. There are, however, different versions in the *puranic* literature regarding these names and the details.)

6. (iii) The *Kurma* (Tortoise), gigantic, supported the Mandara mountain on His back at the time of *amritamathana*. (See Summary, para. 35).

(iv) The *Varaha* (Boar), sportingly salvaged the earth from Rasatala (one of the nether worlds).

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7. (v) Narasimha, the marvellous half man and half lion; the very remembrance of His form rids the good people of all fears.

(vi) Vamana, covered the three worlds in two* strides (*May not be so precise).

8. (vii) Parasurama, Head of the *Bhrigus,* carried out mass destruction of the haughty Kshatriya race.

(viii) Sri Rama, Foremost among the *Raghus,* killed Ravana.

* * *

On the eve of the nativity of Sri Krishna, Brahma, Siva, Narada, other sages and the gods come down to the place of confinement of Devaki and praise the Lord in her womb. They address Him as *Yadu-Uttama* (foremost among the *Yadus*) and conclude the prayer with this verse (9) which contains the names of all the eight incarnations cited above and an additional one, Hamsa.

9. "Even as You have all along saved us and the worlds by taking various incarnations such as *Matsya, Hayagriva, Kurma, Narasimha, Varaha, Hamsa,* Sri Rama, Parasurama and Vamana, please save us now, too; pray relieve the earth of her burden; we bow down to You."

N.B.:—The serial order of the *avataras* mentioned above is immaterial.

6. THE FORMS OF BHAGAVAN

In fact, the 'Forms' are not different from 'Incarnations'. They are dealt with separately only to reveal another aspect of *Bhagavan.*

1. Suta says, "In the beginning, desirous of creating the worlds the Lord assumed the form of *Purusha,* composed of the elements, the sense organs, the mind, intellect, etc."

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(The '*Shodasa*' (sixteen) referred to in the *sloka* is made up of: The five elements — earth, water, fire, air and ether, the five senses of perception, the five organs of action, and the mind.)

2. Suta continues: "This is the Lord's dynamic form of pure *sattva* nature by Whose limbs the different worlds are demarcated.

3. "The sages by their superior vision of Knowledge perceive this marvellous form of myriad feet, thighs, arms, faces, heads, ears, eyes and noses, adorned with gorgeous crowns, earrings and robes."

The aforesaid form is said to be the perennial source from which the various incarnations emanate and to which they ultimately return.

From the navel of the *Purusha* sprouted a lotus from which Brahma, the Creator, appeared. Not finding any other object except the lotus, Brahma searched for its bottom. The search extending over a very long period was in vain. He was then prompted to do penance and ultimately saw within himself what he failed to find outside — an illusory form of the Lord! There are other references to this in the Text but the following is from Prahlada's praise of the Lord in the Seventh *Skandha*.

4. "On seeing the Lord with innumerable faces, feet, heads, hands, thighs, noses, mouths, ears, eyes, ornaments and weapons — an illusory form the limbs of which denote the different parts of the material universe — the Creator became glad."

Dhruva, too, speaks of the gross form of *Bhagavan* extending it to include all creatures, but adds that he is unable to comprehend His transcendental, superior form:

5. "All I know of You, Lord, is Your grossest form made up of the elements, intellect, the sense organs, etc. and manifested as animals, birds, reptiles, trees, gods, demons, human beings and others, and Not Beyond, Which words cannot express".

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Let us try to recognise God's presence in all.

Kavi advises King Nimi:

6. "One should identify the sky, air, fire, water, earth, the luminary bodies, living beings, the quarters, trees, rivers, seas, etc., all as bodies of Hari and respect every being as such."

It is very difficult indeed. Let us try to "capture" the form of Krishna, who was born in captivity, as seen by Vasudeva and Devaki:

7 and 8. "Vasudeva saw Krishna born — a marvellous, lustrous boy with lotus-like eyes, four arms, a charming dark-blue complexion, bright yellow robes, the mark of *Srivatsa* on his bosom and the *Kaustubha* jewel shining around his neck. The boy held in his hands a conch, a mace and a wheel as if ready for use. He wore a priceless *vaidurya* crown and dazzling earrings which brightened his flowing, curly hair. He had also other gorgeous ornaments on, such as a gold waist-belt, gold armlets and bracelets."

Enough to dispel any darkness within.

9. Prahlada says: "Lord, in fact, You are formless. The *Vedas* have ascribed to You these two forms, viz., (i) the Unmanifest and (ii) the visible universe. These are only like the 'seed and the sprout' (which one came first?) one following the other continuously. The *Yogis* by sincere and steadfast devotion alone, and by no other means, are able to find You in both." He cites an example: Fire which exists in every log of wood is visible only by ignition.

7. ADVICE IN ESSENCE

All the first eight *slokas* hereunder are advice by *Bhagavan* Himself, in different contexts. Nos. 2 and 5 to 8 are by Krishna to Uddhava.

We have already seen that *Bhagavatam* was originally imparted by *Bhagavan* to Brahma in four *slokas*. The first one thereof is the first one below.

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1. Says *Bhagavan*: "In the beginning, before creation, I alone existed. There was nothing else, visible, invisible or their cause called *Pradhanam*. Thereafter, this visible universe is Myself. Ultimately what will remain after the *pralaya* will also be Myself alone."

See Summary, para. 86. Sri Krishna tells Uddhava:

2. "I am the Soul of all living beings. Being uncircumscribed, I indwell them and control them from both within and without. You see, the gross elements are both inside and outside all beings; I am likewise."

See Summary, para. 12. In the guise of a Brahmana *Paramatman* tells Puranjana who has since been re-born as a princess of Vidarbha:

3. "You are Myself; you are not different from Me. Understand that I am yourself. The enlightened never see any distinction between you and Me."

This signifies the oneness of *Brahman* and the *jiva*.

See 2 above again. Now *Bhagavan* Kapila tells "mother" Devahuti:

4. "Even as the gross elements are present in all living beings, one should recognize the Self also in all beings without discrimination, also all living beings as within the purview of the Self.

5. Sri Krishna again to Uddhava: "Considering the essential unity of the universe composed of *Prakriti* and *Purusha*, one should neither praise nor criticize others' nature or actions, good or bad."

Indeed a very difficult injunction to follow. A strong determination, constant remembrance of this *sloka* and frequent self-tests will surely help.

To a fundamental question by Uddhava as to who exactly is the subject of *samsara* — whether the soul which is imperishable, spotless and dispassionate or the body which is insensible like a log of wood — and, if neither, *samsara* itself being said to be unreal, then how it is that

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it is evidently being experienced, Sri Krishna replies that the *jiva,* by association with the body, senses, etc. due to ignorance, experiences *samsara,* and adds:

6. "As a result of dwelling on worldly objects the *jiva* experiences *samsara* ceaselessly. This is like a person who thinks of various objects experiencing in a dream things unpleasant, frightening and so on, which as a matter of fact do not arise at all."

The remedy: instead of thinking of worldly things, think of God. Enforce a rigorous self-discipline.

7. "The mind of a person who constantly thinks of sense objects gets stuck to those objects. On the other hand, the mind of one who constantly remembers Me merges in Myself.

8. "Therefore, restrain your speech, regulate your breath, control your mind and senses and curb your general intellect with your own *sattvik* intellect; then you will have no more of *samsara.*"

Asked by King Nimi for advice on *Bhagavata Dharmas,* Kavi, an accredited authority, at the very outset says:

9. "Whatever one does with the body, tongue, mind, senses or intellect, temperamentally or by force of habit, should be dedicated to Lord Narayana."

Commentators interpret the aforesaid as to mean that not merely the prescribed religious acts but whatever acts are dedicated to God will come within '*Bhagavata Dharma*'

Compare *Gita* IX-27:

यत्करोषि यदश्नासि यज्जुहोषि ददासि यत् ।
यत्तपस्यसि कौन्तेय तत्कुरुष्व मदर्पणम् ॥

It is noteworthy that our daily rites as well as the periodical or occasional rites performed to propitiate the *pitrus,* gods and sages invariably end with an expression of dedication to Lord Narayana. It may be added that in-

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stead of a formal *expression* of dedication "नारायणायेति समर्पयामि", if the dedication is done *consciously* it will serve to deter one from any unworthy thought, word or deed.

8. THE IDEAL BHAGAVATA

King Nimi requests the *Navayogis* to describe the qualities of a *Bhagavata*. Hari, serially the second among them (in rank they are all one), replies:

1. "He who recognizes the oneness of God in all beings and himself, and that all beings abide in Him and thereby in himself, is the foremost among *Bhagavatas*." In short it means one who identifies oneself with all beings and God.

Slokas 2 to 5 of the previous series are of special significance in this connection. There are also several other *slokas* in Srimad Bhagavata to this effect. Also compare the following slokas in the *Bhagavad Gita:* Ch. VI — 29, 30, 31; X — 20; XV — 15; XVIII — 61.

2. Hari continues, "Though contacting the various objects with his senses, he who, being unattached, has no special likes or dislikes for them, considering the universe as just an illusory manifestation of the All-pervading Lord, is the ideal *Bhagavata*.

3. "As a result of remembrance of Sri Hari, he who is never overcome by thoughts of birth and death, hunger and thirst, fear, cravings or fatigue, which are natural afflictions of the body, the vital air, the mind, intellect and the senses, is the greatest of *Bhagavatas*.

4. "With Vasudeva as his Sole Refuge, he who never entertains in his heart any desires, thoughts of the attendant actions or the very tendencies which cause these is verily the foremost *Bhagavata*.

5. "He who does not identify himself with his body and rate himself high in regard to parentage, conduct, caste, stage in life, status in society, etc. is a great favourite of Sri Hari.

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6. "With an unfailing conviction that nothing else is worthwhile he who would not, for all the wealth of the three worlds, give up even for a split second the worship of the Lord's feet, which are still sought after by the gods and others who are constantly remembering Him, is the foremost of *Vaishnavas.*

7. "If a person even unconsciously utters His name Sri Hari destroys all his sins. What if he cherishes His lotus feet in his heart with all affection! Bound by the cord of love Sri Hari Himself sticks to his heart. Such a person is said to be the formost *Bhagavata.*"

King Parikshit, an *Uttama Bhagavata* himself, is amazed at the exceptional devotion of the great demon Vritra, who by nature is of the baser qualities. In seeking an answer to this paradox from Sri Suka the king says that of the countless living beings an infinitely small ratio of humans and others aspire for liberation from the world; among thousands of aspirants hardly one succeeds, and

8. "Even among millions of such liberated and enlightened souls it is extremely difficult to find one who is absolutely calm in mind and exclusively devoted to Lord Narayana."

Such a person is no doubt more than welcome to the fold of *Uttama Bhagavatas.*

The aforesaid is the prelude to the story of the previous life of Vritra. At the end of the story Lord Siva pays a tribute to the hero, Chitraketu, saying:

9. "Staunch devotees of Narayana know no fears; they always maintain their equanimity whether in heaven, hell or salvation."

What a fitting conclusion to Hari's definition of an Ideal *Bhagavata*!

9. THE PATH OF DEVOTION

Lord Narasimha has declared that Prahlada is a model for all His devotees. Prahlada opens this *navaka.*

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After he has studied for some time under his family pundits, his father Hiranyakasipu fondly asks him what best he has learned so far, and Prahlad straightway replies:

1 and 2. "Devotion to Lord Vishnu. Hearing of His stories, chanting of His holy names, remembrance of His names and exploits, service of His feet, worship of His image, doing obeisance to Him, attendance on Him, friendship with Him and complete self-surrender to him — practice of this ninefold devotion to Lord Vishnu with prior dedication to Himself is the summit of all learning, I believe."

Almost at the very outset of his seven-day discourse, after naming the respective deities to be propitiated for gaining about twenty-nine different objects, such as the goddess *Maya* for prosperity, Lord Siva for learning and so on, Sri Suka advises:

3. "Whether a man who has no desires at all, or who wants all the twenty-nine named and more or who seeks *moksha*, a wise man must worship the Almighty with intense devotion."

4. And Bhagavan Kapila declares, "Through intense devotion the mind gets firmly fixed on Me. This is the only way for people in this world to attain the *Utmost Good*."

What about the other professed means? Says Sri Krishna to His dearest friend Uddhava:

5 and 6. "No other course wins Me over as does intense devotion — not rituals, not knowledge, not righteousness, not the chanting of *Vedas*, not penance, nor renunciation. Only by exclusive, faithful devotion can I, the Cherished Self of the saintly, be attained. Single-minded devotion to Me cleanses even the lowest-born of their native stigma.

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7. "By sheer affection for Me the *gopis,* cows, deer and even reptiles, trees and other irrational creatures of yore have succeeded in attaining Me easily.

8. "In fact, one who has fixed his mind on Me would not wish for anything — the status of Brahma, much less that of Indra, overlordship of the world, rulership of the nether worlds, the mystic powers or *moksha* even — but Me."

Kavi, the first among the *navayogis,* confirms:

9. "Constant worship of the feet of *Achyuta* leads to devotion to the Lord, detachment from worldly affairs and God-realisation and thereby the *Bhagavata* actually enjoys Supreme Peace."

10. THE LORD'S SOVEREIGN PRAISE

Let us start with the boy-prince, the prince of devotees, Dhruva:

1. "Obeisance to You, the all-energising Supreme Person. Having entered my body, You have by Your inherent vigour enlivened this speech of mine which remained dormant, as also my spirit and other organs such as hands, feet, ears, etc. which all lay inert."

The next *sloka* is the first one in the last chapter of the last *Skandha.* Before enumerating the eighteen *puranas* and the number of *slokas* in each, Suta pays respect to the Hero in all these works.

2. "Obeisance to that Lord Whom Brahma, Siva, Varuna, Indra and other gods extol by divine hymns, Whom the followers of the *Sama Veda* sing in praise with Vedic hymns and their elaborate analyses, Whom the *Yogis* see with their mental eye focussed on Him through sharp meditation but Whose full extent is unknown to the hosts of gods and *asuras.*"

The next one is the beginning of the eulogy of 'The Lord in Devaki's womb' by Brahma, Siva, the gods, sages

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and others — perhaps a sample of the praises referred to above.

3. "You are True to Your resolve. Truth is the best means of attaining You. You are the Unchanging Reality of the past, present and future, being the very origin of the five elements, abiding in these and the One to remain after these are lost. You are the promoter of pleasing and sincere speech and impartial outlook. We seek refuge in You, Who are Truth Itself in all ways."

The word 'Satya' has been used in the verse in different senses, including the five elements collectively, and undiscriminating view.

Brahma reiterates the Reality of the Lord in a subsequent praise of Sri Krishna (Brahma Stuti, SK. X, Ch. 14).

4. "You are the One Reality, being the *Atman* which is intangible, hence imperishable. You are the Prime Person, Self-effulgent and Infinite. You are the Earliest, Undecaying and Everlasting. You are Ever Blissful and Pure. You are self-contained, Unique, free from appendages or impediments and Immortal."

Although God is said to have no particular name or form, now and then He obliges His devotees so as to facilitate His worship. *Prajapati* Daksha extols the Lord by a hymn called Hamsaguhya consisting of twelve grand verses. The following is the penultimate one in the said series.

5. "Though the Infinite Lord has no material form or name, in order to bless those who seek His feet for shelter He assumes particular names and forms through His various incarnations and exploits. May that Supreme Power be pleased to bless me!"

The Lord immediately appears before Daksha in a most charming form, seated on Garuda, of a dark-brown complexion, clad in yellow, having eight long and sturdy arms wielding His conch, mace, discus, sword, etc. and wearing a gorgeous crown, the *Vanamala, Kaustubha* and other

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ornaments and a face of joyous looks. Need we add that He blessed the *Prajapati*?

Though the Lord acts in various roles we benefit by only such as are referred to in 5 above. This is what the sage Markandeya, another devotee of a rare order, acknowledges to the Lord Who appears before him in the twin forms of Nara and Narayana. Says Markandeya:

6. "Great well-wisher of the self, *Rajas, Sattva* and *Tamas* are the three shadow agencies You employ for the purposes of creation, protection and dissolution of this universe. Though it is all a sport for You and all Your own, it is only the *Sattvic* part that is conducive to man's Absolute Peace, not the other two from which arise misery, delusion and fear."

Reference may be made here to another verse, No. 23 in Chapter 2 of Skandha I, which reads to the effect, "*Rajas, Sattva* and *Tamas* are the three qualities of *Prakriti* with which the self-same Lord creates, protects and liquidates the universe under the respective styles of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. Of these the good of man is derived from the Lord in *Sattva* quality, because it is this quality that reveals *Brahman*".

No disrespect is meant for Brahma and Siva. We are not competent to comment further on this here.

The next is by Prahlada, the 'model for *bhaktas*'. Towards the end of his eulogy of Lord Narasimha he says:

7. "Praiseworthy Lord, these *gunas,* the deities claiming them, the cosmic intellect, the ego, the elements, the sense organs, the mind, the gods, humans and other creatures, all being subject to the limits of time cannot truly know You Who are eternal. Realising this, those who are wise give up the *Vedas* (and take to exclusive meditation on You as the goal)."

Again, derogatory to the *Vedas*? And what does he mean?

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Bhagavan tells Arjuna something like this (Gita 11, 45) "The *Vedas* deal with *traigunya* — the three *gunas* and their resultant objects; You be above it .... Be ever pure in heart and self-controlled."

Traigunya is explained as *samsara*, the product of the three *gunas* in the form of worldly enjoyments. By *Vedas* the *Karmakanda* is meant here, which deals with the means of attaining worldly enjoyments. The road to worldly enjoyments does not lead to God. *Bhagavan*, therefore, advises Arjuna to be free from the desire for such enjoyments. As it is not possible to give up desire, with the mind uncontrolled, He adds "Be .... self-controlled". Prahlada's statement that the wise people give up the Vedas is only in this sense.

It is a common experience that even godly people have their own sufferings, sometimes very severe, which might tend to weaken their fath in God. Brahma reassures them, as it were, in the name of Krishna:

8. "Eagerly awaiting Your favour as sure to come some day, he who carries on his life evenly taking as the result of his past actions whatever experiences — good or bad — without attachment or murmur, at the same time bowing to You mentally, orally and physically, is thereby entitled to salvation."

The royal sage Muchukunda provides a fitting pendant to this *navaratnamala* (see Summary, para. 66).

The former half of the verse is applicable to almost all; the latter half is open to all. Says Muchukunda to Sri Krishna who is in front of him:

9. "Suffering long in this world from the results of past actions and further tormented by the tendencies left behind by the actions, I am sore distracted by the ever unsatisfied internal foes in the guise of the five senses and the mind, and thus am left with no peace of mind. Self-revealing Lord, Refuge of the distressed, somehow I have now come upon Your Lotus Feet, the Eternal Truth, Where

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there is no fear, no grief. Lord, pray save this suffering soul."

11. THE PROMISED LAND

The sage Narada consoles *Bhakti* represented by a young woman and, through her, everybody in a similar situation:

1. "Needlessly do you feel sad. Oh, why should you be so care-worn! Remember the Lotus Feet of Sri Krishna, and misery will quit."

Evincing their eagerness to hear the exploits of Krishna, the sages Sounaka and others in the Naimisha forest tell Suta:

2. "A victim of this terrible *samsara* secures immediate deliverance by the mere utterance, even unconsciously or in a helpless condition, of His Name which dispels all fears."

Referring to King Parikshit's fearlessness even in the face of his impending doom by the dread Takshaka's sting, Suta says:

3. "Those who are engaged in talking of the Lord, the worthiest to be talked of, who enjoy His delightful stories or even remember His Lotus Feet will not be perturbed even at the time of their death."

Sri Suka glorifies *Bhagavan's* feet further:

4. "The tender feet of Lord *Murari* of auspicious fame are the goal of exalted souls. They serve as a boat to cross the sea of *samsara*. To those who cling to this boat of *Bhagavan's* feet the limitless *samsara* shrinks to a calf's-foot span. *Vaikunta* becomes their abode — for ever, the world of misery no more having a place for them."

It has been laid down that a *dwija* is born with three debts — to the gods, the sages and the *pitrus*. A fourth

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one may be added to any man, viz., obligation to others. Further, one shall not forsake one's *swadharma*. To one who clings to the Lord's feet exclusively, what will happen in respect of the said obligations and *swadharma*?

Implying that the do's and dont's do not apply to a staunch devotee, Karabhajana, serially the last of the *navayogis*, assures King Nimi:

5 and 6. Bidding good-bye to his so-called prescribed duties, he who whole-heartedly resorts to the Saviour Mukunda will be rid of his obligations to the gods, the sages, the *pitrus*, his dependants and all others and therefore will not have to wait upon any. Such a person who worships the feet of Sri Hari out of sheer love and not having any other thoughts can do no wrong; should any lapse occur somehow, the Supreme Lord enshrined in his heart will absolve the beloved devotee from it all."

Concluding His parting advice to Uddhava running through twenty-three chapters, Sri Krishna avers:

7. "When a man abandons all duties and dedicates himself solely to Me he becomes My chosen favourite; he not only attains immortality but also is verily due for oneness with Me."

Bhagavan Kapila tells mother Devahuti that the terrible fear of *samsara* cannot be overcome by any means except Himself and adds:

8. "For everlasting bliss, therefore, the *Yogis* through devotion combined with knowledge and dispassion take to My feet where there is absolutely no sort of fear."

Suta concludes his Bhagavata discourse:

9. "The chanting of Sri Hari's name removes all sins. Bowing to Him saves all from misery. WE BOW DOWN TO THAT LORD HARI."

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12. CHERISHED RECOLLECTION

1. "This Unique Torchlight of Bhagavata was so kindly revealed by Lord Narayana originally to Brahma, the Creator, then through Brahma to the sage Vyasa, in the name of Vyasa to the pre-eminent *Yogi* Suka and through Sri Suka (but all through by Bhagavan Himself) to King Parikshit. We meditate on That Pure, Immaculate, Blissful, Eternal, Supreme Reality called Narayana."

2. "Ye blessed souls having a taste for divine joy, enjoy again and again till the very end this nectar of Srimad Bhagavata, the essence of the *Vedas,* passed on to us with added sweetness by Sri Suka."

3. "Herein has been extolled Sri Narayana, that is, Sri Hari Himself, the dispeller of all sins, the ruler of the senses, the Lord Who protects His devotees".

4. "When the names or glories of the Infinite Lord are chanted or listened to by people, He enters their hearts and completely destroys their miseries even as the Sun dispels all darkness or a violent gale dissipates the clouds."

5 and 6. "It is said that words that are not relevant to God, Who is beyond sense-perception, are hollow, fictitious and not worthwhile. Only that composition which recounts His glories is considered true, that alone is auspicious and holy. That alone is pleasing and provides ever new delight; that alone keeps the mind in constant exultation, that alone can dry up the ocean of human misery."

7. "The weary exercises in the performance of various duties according to one's *varna* and *asrama,* austerities, learning, etc. are only for a name and prosperity; whereas the recounting, listening to etc. of Sri Hari's activities result in constant remembrance of His Lotus Feet.

8. "And constant remembrance of Sri Krishna's Lotus Feet removes all evils, affords peace of mind, purifies the heart, develops devotion to the Lord and endows the Sup-

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reme Knowledge coupled with Self-realisation and dispassion."

Uddhava's final prayer to Sri Krishna. Let it be ours, too.

9. "Obeisance to You, my Lord, I have sought refuge in You; pray instruct me so I may have everlasting devotion to your Lotus Feet."

* * *

Humbly offered to Sri Krishna.

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APPENDIX— I

REFERENCE CHART

Note:—

i. Col. A refers to the serial numbers of the verses in each Series.

ii. Columns B, C and D refer to Srimad Bhagavata Skandha, chapter and verse numbers respectively. The Skandha numbers are indicated in Roman numerals.

iii. BM means Bhagavata Mahatmya contained in the Padma Purana.

Series I				Series II				Series III			
A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D
1	BM	2	56	1	I	19	13	1	X	1	15
2	,	,,	57	2	,,	,,	14	2	,,	,,	16
3	,,	,,	71	3	,,	,,	3	3	II	4	12
4	XII	13	10	4	,,	,,	24	4	,,	,,	15
5	,,	,,	12	5	,,	,,	15	5	,,	,,	18
6	BM	1	12	6	X	7	2	6	,,	,,	20
7	I	1	2	7	,,	80	3	7	,,	,,	21
	BM	6	81								
8	BM	6	82	8	,,	,,	4	8	,,	,,	22
9	,,	,,	83	9	I	19	16	9	,,	,,	23

Series IV				Series V				Series VI			
A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D
1	XI	2	29	1	IX	24	56	1	I	3	1
2	IV	30	34	2	I	3	26	2	,,	,,	3
3	VI	11	27	3	,,	,,	27	3	,,	,,	4
4	IV	29	39	4	,,	,,	28	4	VII	9	36
5	,,	,,	40	5	X	40	17	5	IV	9	18
6	V	12	13	6	,,	,,	18	6	XI	2	41
7	I	2	16	7	,,	,,	19	7	X	3	9
8	V	5	2	8	,,	,,	20	8	,,	,,	10
9	BM	4	80	9	,,	2	40	9	VII	9	47

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Series VII				Series VIII				Series IX			
A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D
1	II	9	32	1	XI	2	45	1	VII	5	23
2	XI	15	36	2	,,	,,	48	2	,,	,,	24
3	IV	28	62	3	,,	,,	49	3	II	3	10
4	III	,,	42	4	,,	,,	50	4	III	25	44
5	XI	,,	1	5	,,	,,	51	5	XI	14	20
6	,,	,,	13	6	,,	,,	53	6	,,	,,	21
7	,,	14	27	7	,,	,,	55	7	,,	12	8
8	,,	16	42	8	VI	14	5	8	,,	14	14
9	,,	2	36	9	,,	17	28	9	,,	2	43

Series X				Series XI				Series XII			
A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D
1	IV	9	6	1	BM	2	1	1	XII	13	19
2	XII	13	1	2	I.	1	14	2	BM	6	80
									I	1	3
3	X	2	26	3	,,	18	4	3	XII	12	3
4	,,	14	23	4	X	14	58	4	,,	,,	47
5	VI	4	33	5	XI	5	41	5	,,	,,	48
6	XII	8	45	6	,,	,,	42	6	,,	,,	49
7	VII	9	49	7	,,	29	34	7	,,	,,	53
8	X	14	8	8	III	25	43	8			54
9	,,	51	58	9	XII	13	23	9	XI	29	40

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APPENDIX—II

GLOSSARY

Note: The meanings given hereunder have mostly been restricted to the contexts in which the respective words have been used in this booklet. Capital or small letters in the beginning of these (non-English) words have been used rather casually and not always with a special meaning.

A

ahamkara	Sense of Self; egotism; the conceipt or conception of individuality.
Amritamathana	Churning (of the ocean of milk) for nectar.
artha	Wealth, riches; attainment of which is regarded as one of the four principal ends in life.
asrama	(1) A hermitage, (2) A stage or order in one's life.
Atman	(1) Self, (2) The Supreme Soul, (3) The individual soul.

B

Bhagavata	(1) Srimad Bhagavata, (2) A devotee of God.
Bhakti Yoga	The path of devotion; loyal devotion.
Bhramaragita	The song of a bee. In fact, it is a series of verses addressed to a bee by a *gopi* imagining it to be a messenger of Sri Krishna.
Bhrigus	The family of Lord Parasurama.
Brahma(n)	(1) The Creator, (2) The Supreme Being. The all-pervading soul and spirit of the Universe.
Brahmacharin	A celibate; a Brahmana in the first stage or order of his life observing celibacy.

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Brahmacharya — The life of a Brahmacharin (see above).

Brahmanyadeva — Worshipper of Brahmanas.

C

Charanas — Celestial singers.

D

Dwija — A Brahmana; also one who belongs to the Kshatriya or Vaisya caste.

G

Gajendra — The king of elephants.

Gaya sraddha — Ceremony in honour of departed relatives performed at Gaya, a place believed to be highly propitious for the purpose.

Gopa — A cowherd.

Gopi — A cowherdess, a milk-maid.

Grihastha — A householder; the second stage in life (see Asrama (2)).

Guna — (1) A qualty (good or bad), (2) a constituent of nature; one of the three properties belonging to all created beings.

I

Itihasa — Heroic history (legendary or traditional, such as the Mahabharata).

J

Jiva — The individual soul; a living being.

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K

Kailasa	The above of Lord Siva on the Himalayas.
Kaivalya(m)	Final emancipation or beatitude.
Kali, Kaliyuga	(1) Strife, quarrel, dissension; (2) The iron age, the last in the cycle of four ages.
Kama	Worldly desires, fulfilment of which is regarded as one of the four objects of human existence.
Karma	(1) Action, performance of religious rites; (2) Consequence of past actions.
Karmakanda	That part of the *Vedas* which deals with ceremonial acts and sacrificial rites and the merit accruing from their due performance.
Kavi	Name of one of the nine Yogis, sons of Rishabha, who advise King Nimi, vide para 85 of Summary.
Kritayuga	The first in the cycle of four ages; the golden age.

M

Maruts	The wind-gods, half-brothers of Indra.
Matsyavatara	The Lord's incarnation as a Fish.
Maya	The Lord's deluding potency; illusion.
Mukti	Final emancipation; saving of the soul from re-births.
Murari	Sri Krishna, who killed the demon Mura.

N

Navayogis	The nine seers. (see Summary para 85).

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P

Para Brahman Paramatman — The Supreme Spirit.

Paramahamsa — An ascetic of the highest order.

Pitrus — The manes; deified souls of departed ancestors.

Prachetas — The sons of King Prachinabarhis. They propitiated Sri Hari by chanting the hymn called Rudragitam as advised by Lord Siva. It was to King Prachinabarhis that Narada narrated the story of Puranjana (Summary para 12).

Pradhanam — The originator or source of the material world.

Prajapatis — The (ten) lords of created beings first created by Brahma.

Prakriti — Nature (as distinguished from Purusha), the original source of the material world, consisting of the three essential qualities Sattva, Rajas and Tamas.

Pralaya — The destruction of the whole universe (at the end of a Kalpa, i.e., millions of years).

Prithvi — The earth (adopted as his daughter by King Prithu).

Punya(m) — (1) Holy, (2) Religious merit.

Purusha — (1) A human male, (2) The Supreme Being, the Soul of the universe.

Purusharthas — The four principal objects of human life. (Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha).

R

Raghus — The family of King Raghu, an ancestor of Sri Rama.

rajas — The second of the three *gunas* (see *guna* and *Prakriti*). It is supposed to

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	be the cause of the great activity seen in creatures. (2) Passion, emotion, greed, etc.
Rajasuya	A great sacrifice performed by a monarch as a mark of his undisputed sovereignty.
ratnakara	The ocean; a mine of jewels.

S

Sadhusanga *Satsanga*	The company of saints or saintly people.
Samkalpa	A solemn vow to perform an observance, usually forming a preamble to the performance itself.
Samnyasa *Sannyasa*	The fourth *asrama*; renouncing the world.
samsara	The vicious cycle of births and deaths; mundane existence.
sattva *sattvik*	The first of the three *gunas*; noble, pure, virtuous, etc.
Satya(loka)	The abode of Brahma.
Siddhas	A class of semi-divine beings supposed to be of great purity and holiness and having supernatural powers.
srivatsa	A mark or curly hair on the breast of Lord Vishnu.
stuti	Praise, eulogy.
sudra	A person of the last of the four principal castes among the Hindus.
swadharma	One's own duty prescribed according to one's caste and stage in life.

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T

Tamas — The third of the three *gunas*; ignorance, lethargy, anger, etc.

U

Upanishads — Philosophical treatises forming an exposition of the Vedas and helping to gain true knowledge regarding the Supreme Spirit.

V

vairagya — Aversion to worldly desires; asceticism.

Vaishnava — A devotee of Vishnu.

vanamala — A garland of sylvan flowers, a favourite adornment of the Lord.

vanaprastha — The third *asrama;* leading the life of a hermit.

varna — Caste, especially applied to the four principal castes among the Hindus.

vaidurya — A precious stone.

Vidyadharas — A class of demigods.

Y

Yadava — Belonging to the family of Yadu, an ancestor of Sri Krishna.

Yadus — The family of Yadu.

yagna — A sacrifice.

yati — An ascetic.

yoga — (1) Endeavour, zeal; (2) Deep and abstract meditation, contemplation of the Supreme Spirit.

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Yogi	One who practises *yoga*; a contemplative saint.
Yoga Maya	The power of God in the creation of the world personified as a deity; (also see Maya).
yuga	An age of the world. (See Kaliyuga and Kritayuga).
Yugala gita	Song in pairs of verses (sung by the *gopis*).

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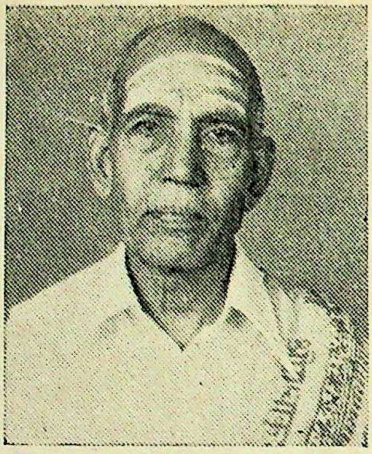

THE AUTHOR

Born in 1910 at Trichur, Kerala, Shri T. B. Dharmaraja Iyer graduated from Madras University in 1930.

Immediately after graduation, Shri Dharmaraja Iyer joined the banking industry which he served till he retired in 1978. Holder of a recognised Diploma in Banking, Shri Dharmaraja Iyer held senior positions in different reputed banks and has travelled widely.

While Shri Dharmaraja Iyer makes no claims to scholarship, he has, out of devotion, composed a few poems in Sanskrit including *Sri Krishnahridayam* which was published. He developed great love for the Sanskrit language from his school days which actually drove him to the study of religious and puranic literature. Deeply devoted and religious, Shri Dharmaraja Iyer wanted to share his thoughts with his friends and colleagues and he has been conducting informal weekly discourses on religious topics, particularly *Srimad Bhagavatam*.

The book 'Bhagavataratnavali' is a collection of 108 verses selected from the 18,000 verses contained in '*Srimad Bhagavatam*'. To those who in the midst of the pressures of modern life cannot spare long hours to go through the voluminous original Text, this '*Mini-Bhagavata*' will be a boon, as the verses are selected with a view to developing *bhakti*, *jnana* and *vairagya* effectively.

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